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**GEORGE
RUSSELL
READY TO
BE MERC'S
TOP DOG?**



EXCLUSIVE

**RED BULL vs
MERCEDES vs
MCLAREN vs FERRARI...**

JACK ATTACK
HOW DOOHAN
HAS ALREADY
BEATEN ONE
SCHUMACHER...

WHO WILL WIN THE FORMULA 1 TECH WAR

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an F1 titan...
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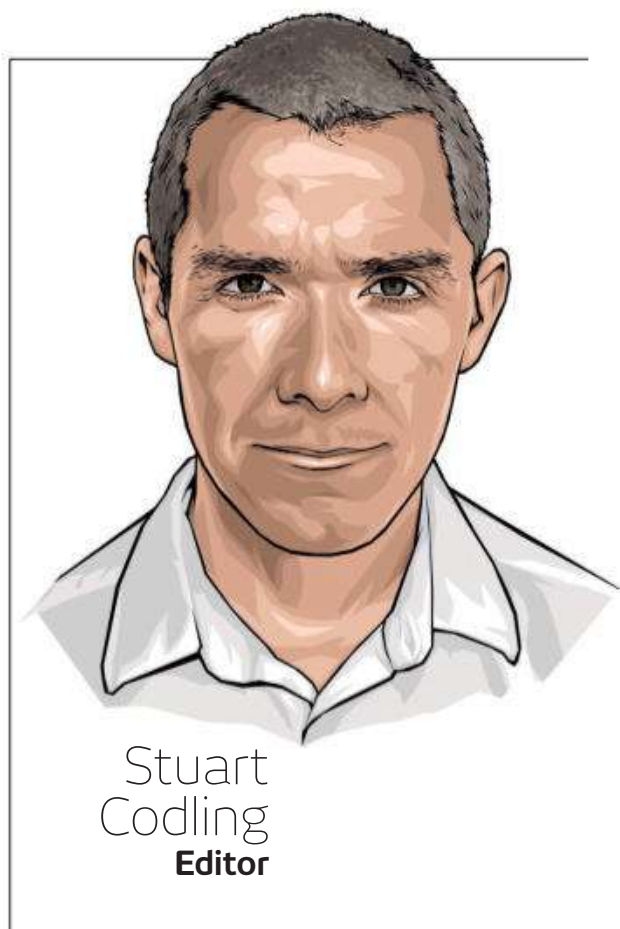
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Shell's Valeria Loreti



Stuart
Codling
Editor



Money no object?

Many fans claim Lewis Hamilton to be the greatest Formula 1 driver of all time. There are those who regard Adrian Newey as occupying a similar plane in the field of engineering. Whether you agree with either or both of these beliefs or not, the proposition of Hamilton driving a Ferrari whose design was superintended by Newey was delicious.

Sadly it's not going to happen, thanks to the depth of Aston Martin owner Lawrence Stroll's pockets and Newey deciding, at the age of 65, that a Rosetta Stone subscription doesn't represent a productive use of his time.

It's understood Aston Martin offered Newey \$100m over three seasons, a figure that Ferrari wasn't willing to match – and Newey didn't want to move to Italy. There had been a consultancy deal on the table enabling him to contribute from the UK but, given historic precedent, it's probably for the best that this didn't happen.

Twice Ferrari hired superstar engineer John Barnard as technical director and twice it submitted to his desire to work from premises close enough to his Godalming abode that he could go home for lunch. The first time around it didn't work out owing to factional warfare – a group of engineers irked by him being hired above their heads took advantage of Barnard's absence from Maranello to design their own car. Amusingly, once Barnard moved on (to Benetton), McLaren became the beneficiary of Ferrari's UK

investment, acquiring the small factory in the industrial estate overlooking the River Wey at Shalford and using it as the HQ for the F1 road car project. The second time around, Jean Todt soon recognised that faxing design blueprints page by page from leafy Surrey to Maranello was a sub-optimal working practice.

Of course, technology has moved on since then and, post-pandemic, working from home has become a thing... Well, until recently, when many companies have begun to tug the bungee cord and instruct their employees to drag themselves back to the office.

It's often said that any problem can be solved provided you throw enough money at it. I would contend that Toyota disproved the validity of this maxim in F1 but there's no doubt Lawrence Stroll is willing to spend whatever it takes to elevate his team to the front of the grid. There's a smart new factory opposite the gates of Silverstone, with a cutting-edge windtunnel opening soon. Still, you have to question the wisdom of simply adding big-name hires to an already top-heavy structure when McLaren, to name just one example, is doing perfectly well by getting the best out of its existing talent...

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Contributors



OLEG KARPOV

Oleg introduces Jonathan Wheatley, Red Bull's current sporting director, who is set to become team principal at Audi (p66)



JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

Autosport's F1 writer analyses what's being going on in the 2024 tech war and which team or teams are coming out on top (p32)



ALEX KALINAUCKAS

Autosport's GP editor ruminates over George Russell's performances this year as he's set to take over as top dog at Mercedes in 2025 (p52)



JAMES MANN

Another superbly photographed car from James for our *Now That Was A Car* feature. This month it's the Brabham BT26A (p74)

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Logan's run out of time

This was one of those accidents that really brings home to you how much energy a Formula 1 car is channelling – and where it goes when the car stops going where it's supposed to. I was positioned pointing back down the track towards Turns 3 and 4 where there's a bit of a crest and the opportunity for a nice action shot (in good weather).

With that level of zoom I could see as Logan Sargeant came into view that he was a bit too far over. Then he disappeared out of my viewfinder and I heard the crunch as his car smote the barrier. As a professional you try not to panic but it's difficult when bits of car are flying towards you at speed...



Photographer
Simon Galloway

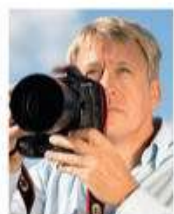
Where Zandvoort, Holland
When 11:45am, Saturday
24 August 2024

Details Nikon Z9
70-200mm lens, 1/200th @ F7.1

Respect among gladiators

I love the current crop of young drivers. They race hard on the track but are then perfectly happy to hang out with each other away from it. OK, so it's not quite like the days of Jackie Stewart, Jim Clark and Graham Hill and their wives all sipping cocktails around the hotel pool or whatever, but it's a lot more convivial than the often ridiculous antics of Ayrton Senna and Alain Prost.

This shot is from the first chicane near the end of FP2, and you can see the respect between George Russell and Lando Norris as they check where each other's car is while still seeing what they can get away with over the kerbs at this critical corner.



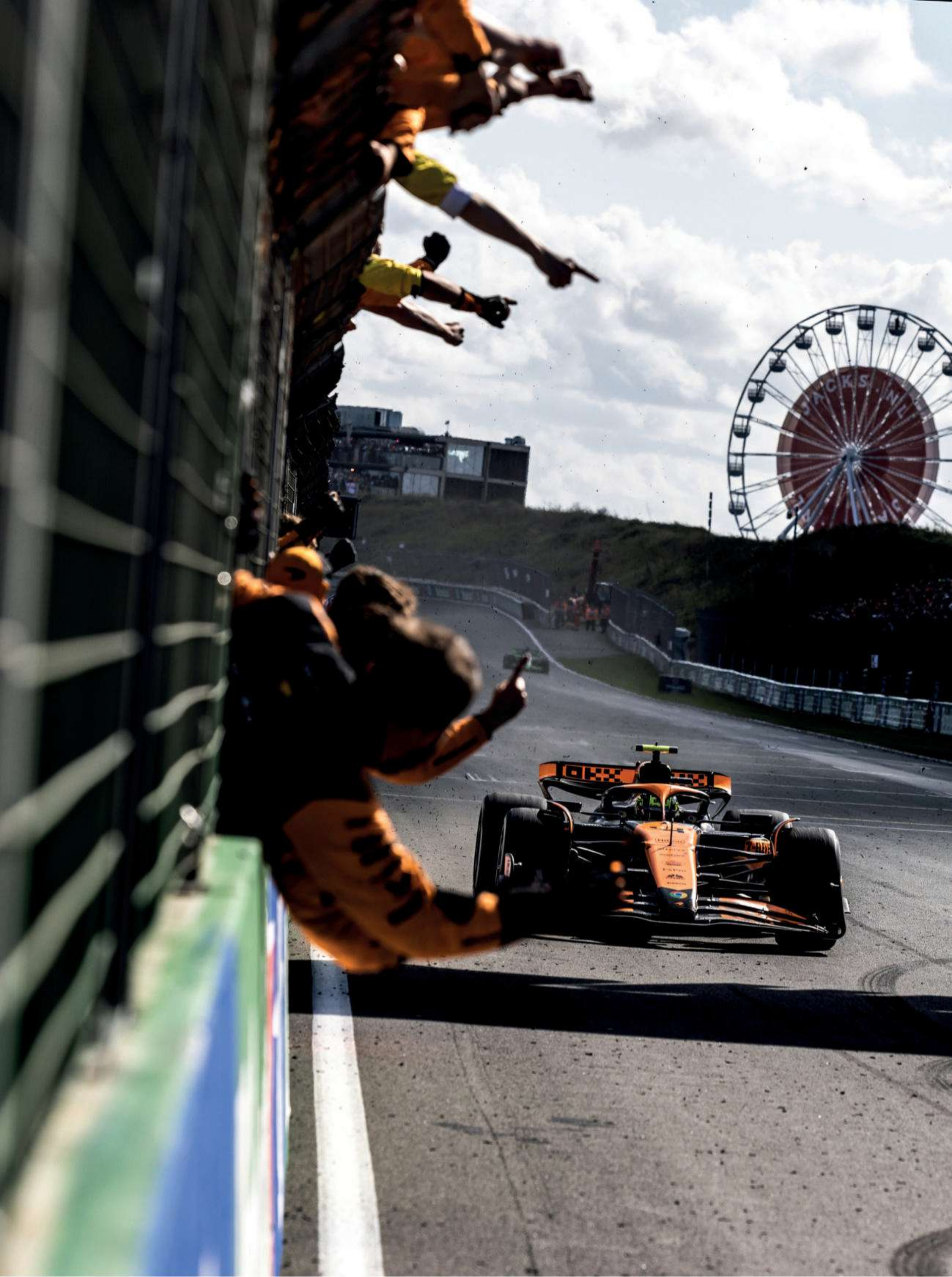
Photographer
Steven Tee

Where Monza, Italy
When 5:53pm, Friday
30 August 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
400mm lens, 1/2000th @ F5.6









Teamwork makes the dream work

Although I don't shoot F1 full-time anymore it was a pleasure to join the Motorsport Images crew so Zak Mauger could have the weekend off. Although I was working his usual brief as Aston Martin's official photographer there was more to do – and, since the MSI team could see a Lando Norris victory coming from quite early on in the weekend, we worked out how to cover it from every angle.

Since I was in the Aston Martin garage, next to McLaren, it made sense for me to get the 'team shot'. So on the final lap I ran across the pitlane to capture it. Normally the drivers slow down as they pass the team but Lando was really flying to get the extra point for fastest lap.



Photographer
Andrew Ferraro

Where Zandvoort, Holland

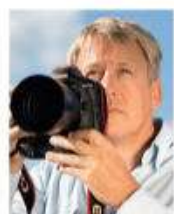
When 4:34pm, Sunday
25 August 2024

Details Canon EOS R5
70-200mm lens, 1/1250th @ F4.5

Lando caught on the hop

Having access to the McLaren garage has many benefits because you can capture some different angles on some quite routine procedures. Often at the end of a session the team will do full practice pitstops on each car as they come in, so it's more like actual racing conditions than normal practice pitstops where the car is rolled into place. The lead car is quickly pushed out of the way to make room for the second one to come in.

It was another surprisingly hot early autumn day at Monza so naturally Lando was keen to alight from the car as soon as possible. A combination of these factors, a wide-angle lens and a rather theatrical dismount makes for a great photo.



Photographer
Steven Tee

Where Monza, Italy
When 1:34pm, Saturday
31 August 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
16-35mm lens, 1/200th @ F6.3









Speed takes twists and turns

Sometimes the stars just align for an interesting shot. Traditionalists don't like the Variante della Roggia chicane, of course, but it's a necessary safety feature that's been part of the track layout for a very long time. And it's certainly an exciting place to stand because the cars come screaming past you at the exit. Shooting across the corner gives you quite a nice graphic effect in the background with the curvature of the road – and, at this time of day, when the sun's out you get a lovely backlit effect on the cars.

The new asphalt at Monza caught a lot of drivers out. Carlos Sainz was fast enough for P3 in this session but here he had to short-cut the corner as he realised he wasn't going to make it.



Photographer
Simon Galloway

Where Monza

When 5:52pm, Friday
30 August 2024

Details Nikon Z9
400mm lens, 1/1250th @ F4.5

ANTONELLI: ONE YEAR TO PROVE HIMSELF

01 **Toto Wolff claims it took just five minutes** for him to decide who would replace Lewis Hamilton after Lewis informed him he'd signed for Ferrari. But it took seven months to put pen to paper – and this wasn't because of a shortage at Brackley's nearest branch of Ryman. Wolff hasn't really bothered to hide the fact that he's been trying to lure Max Verstappen away from Red Bull – and he's aligned his pieces in order to carry on doing so, since George Russell and Andrea Kimi Antonelli have only been confirmed for 2025 for now...

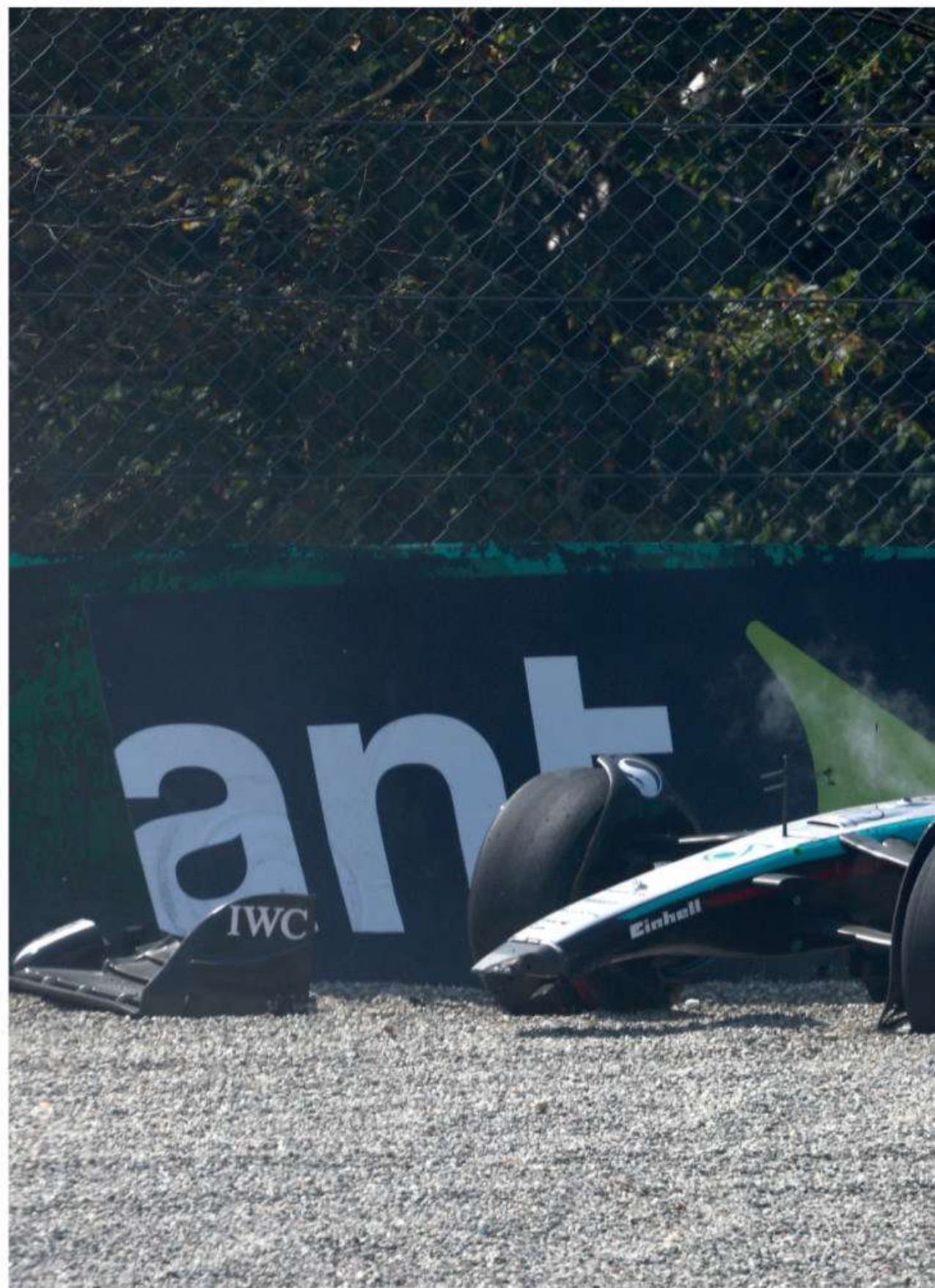
Mercedes' final 2025 line-up was always the most likely outcome. Antonelli, who has just turned 18, was destined for the Mercedes seat. It was a long-term plan for Wolff way before Hamilton decided he needed a change of scene. Indeed, the young Italian was one of the reasons Lewis didn't get the three-year deal he was pushing for 12 months ago. Instead, he and Mercedes settled on a one-plus-one contract, which gave the seven-time world champion an option to leave after 2024. And that's when the original plan went off the rails.

The ideal scenario for Wolff would have been to keep Hamilton until the end of 2025. This would have given Toto the chance to avoid rushing Antonelli's promotion and offered a number of options: his young protégé could have spent two years in Formula 2, or – in the event of winning the championship in his maiden year – spend 2025 at a team such as Williams, adapting to F1 before moving to Mercedes. But Lewis's imminent move to Ferrari put Toto in a quandary.

"I made up my mind five minutes after Lewis Hamilton told me that he's going to Ferrari," Wolff told the media in Monza on the day of Antonelli's announcement. There's really only two reasons why that announcement came so late.

The first is Max Verstappen. His relationship with Red Bull was once seemingly unbreakable but various dramas this year – infighting at the top of the business, questions over team boss Christian Horner's conduct towards a female employee, on-track performance going south – has revealed major fractures. At one point in the spring it looked as if Wolff might actually succeed in signing him for 2025, despite Max's Red

ESSENTIALLY, WOLFF HAS GIVEN HIMSELF THE OPTION OF KEEPING THE SAME LINE-UP THROUGH TO 2026



Mercedes will be hoping Antonelli's F1 practice debut off at the Parabolica (above), will quickly be forgotten when he races for the team

Bull contract running until 2028.

The second reason is Antonelli himself. Wolff's Italian protégé could have single-handedly ended his boss's doubts if his F2 campaign had started in the same way as his entire junior career. But after winning five titles in two years in the lower categories, Kimi really struggled in F2. Had he won a couple of races early in the season, it would have been easier for Toto to be confident. But not only was Antonelli failing to win, he wasn't even challenging for the podium in most races. And while it was clear that his struggles were partly the fault of the team – Prema failed to get to grips with the new F2 car straight away – Wolff had plenty of reasons to doubt Antonelli was ready for the step up to F1.

The breakthrough came in July. Antonelli won the F2

02 A NEW DAWN

Tech legend joins Aston Martin

03 SWISS ROLE

Binotto starts at Sauber



At the Monza press conference (below) Wolff claimed it took him five minutes to decide on Antonelli to replace Hamilton



As things stand Antonelli's drive is only confirmed for 2025. It will be up to him to perform

The media were naturally out in force for Antonelli's first public run in F1 machinery (below)



PICTURES: SAM BLOXHAM; ZAK MAUGER; MERCEDES

sprint at Silverstone and then the feature race in Hungary. He also showed real progress during Mercedes' private testing sessions with its previous F1 cars. Furthermore, the possibility of Verstappen joining Mercedes began to fade as Red Bull managed to calm things down internally.

At Zandvoort, during the first race weekend after the summer break, Wolff admitted he had held talks with Verstappen's management team over the summer, during which it was made clear Max wouldn't be available in 2025. A week later, Antonelli's promotion was officially announced.

Notably, Mercedes only confirmed the line-up for 2025. Antonelli will be Russell's team-mate, but there was no mention of long-term contracts in the official press release – and this was taken by observers as further proof that Wolff

has no intention of giving up on Verstappen.

"Those two are the future," Wolff insisted, but declined to confirm that either would be driving for Mercedes beyond 2025. "They have been and will be Mercedes drivers, and therefore, we have contracts with George and Kimi that go much longer, that are very complicated in terms of options, etc. And this is a pressure cooker. I say there always has been a pressure cooker. But this is where we stand as a team today, we want to go with these two."

Essentially, Wolff has given himself the option of keeping the same line-up through to 2026 – or changing it if other possibilities arise. Next year's campaign could still turn into a head-to-head battle between Russell and Antonelli for a 2026 Mercedes drive... ▶

NEWWEY AIMS TO SHARE IN ASTON'S RISE

02 “I think we all know nothing good is cheap,” quipped Lawrence Stroll on the day Adrian Newey was announced as Aston Martin’s new ‘managing technical partner’. The abstruse nature of that job title is a factor of how many senior – and expensive – engineers Stroll has recruited in recent years before opportunistically reeling in the biggest fish of all.

This is not just a case of adding another talent to the pile. When Newey starts work in March he will not only be immediately immersed in the business of shaping Aston Martin’s 2026 car, he will have overall responsibility for deciding the team’s technical structure. Crucially for him, on top of a salary commensurate with his standing (said to be worth \$100m over three years), Newey will be a shareholder in the team.

“I was very flattered to have a lot of approaches from various teams but really Lawrence’s passion, commitment and enthusiasm is very persuasive,” Newey said at the Aston Martin ‘reveal’.

“If you go back 20 years, what we now call team principals were also the owners of the business – Frank Williams, Ron Dennis, Eddie Jordan, etc. In this modern era Lawrence is unique in being the only properly active team owner. It’s a very different feeling, back to the old-school model. The chance to be a shareholder and a partner is something that hasn’t been offered to me before.”

It’s known that as far back as his Williams days Newey wanted a say in business decisions outside the engineering



Stroll has got his man (above) and Newey his shareholding in an F1 team. Now Newey will get closer to Aston’s cars (below)



sphere. He was never going to get that with Frank Williams and Patrick Head so determined (at the time) not to dilute their shareholding. A key reason for Newey leaving, as he detailed in his autobiography, was his exclusion over the decision-making behind firing Damon Hill in favour of Jacques Villeneuve.

Newey has also been candid about his reasons for departing McLaren, where he and Ron Dennis fell out over Dennis’s unwillingness to commit to a timescale for handing over the reins of the business. And while he and Red Bull team principal Christian Horner had previously appeared to be a tight fighting unit, strains have appeared there too. After Horner began openly briefing against his chief technical officer last year, downplaying his involvement in car design and saying Newey only worked part time, word circulated in the paddock that Newey responded with a blistering three-page memo detailing every aspect of the car he had influenced.

Nevertheless he was cagey when pushed on how often he would be in the office and how hands-on he would be.

“I don’t know where three days a week came from,” he said. “It’s well known that in 2014 with the hybrid engine we didn’t have a very competitive [Renault] PU and there was no light at the end of the tunnel. That’s when I felt I needed something else to also be involved in, which became the Valkyrie. Once we got the Honda PU it was a very different position and I got properly back involved in the F1 side. It’s now a very mature team so I felt able, once we got through the peak of designing the regulation-change car, to step back a little bit.

“This is something different, a fresh challenge. I always do what I feel is needed for the best of the team.” ▶

NEWS IN BRIEF... NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN BRIEF...

CIRCUIT



THE SECOND PHASE of the redevelopment of the Hungaroring is moving on apace. The first phase, which only got underway at the start of the year, was completed in May. The second part of the works involves the demolition of the existing pit building to make way for a new complex, and a new main grandstand.

SPRINT RACE

The F1 Commission is to discuss the idea of a rookie sprint race, to be held after the post-Abu Dhabi GP test. Drivers that have not competed in more than two GPs would be eligible. Logistical complexities mean it is viewed as a long-term ambition and not for the 2024 season.

SPONSOR

F1 has announced Lenovo as its latest global partner in a deal that will see the tech company become the title sponsor of two GPs from 2025 onwards. The deal also sees Motorola, a subsidiary of Lenovo, installed as F1’s global smartphone sponsor

HIRE

Ferrari team has appointed former Mercedes man Loic Serra as its new technical director on the chassis side. Ferrari poached Serra in the summer of 2023 but a long gardening leave period means his first day at Maranello will be 1 October.

PICTURES: ASTON MARTIN; MARK SUTTON; HUNGARORING



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AUDI ADAPTS TO HARD TRUTHS

03 Nobody said it was going to be easy. But in the case of Audi, it's as if the realisation of just how difficult it is going to be to turn the Sauber team into a dominant force is only just beginning to dawn.

Two years on from the announcement that Audi would be entering F1 in 2026, via an acquisition of the venerable Swiss team and its facilities, there's fewer reasons to believe the German manufacturer will be blessed with immediate success. A complete change of leadership before the official start of the project is never a good sign. The fact that the new boss says we shouldn't expect any victories in the next five years isn't much of a reason to get excited either.

Mattia Binotto made his first paddock appearance as Audi's new F1 programme chief at Monza, and his comments suggest there isn't much optimism in the German manufacturer's camp a year and a bit before the official debut. Major regulation changes always present the opportunity for a shift in F1's pecking order – but it seems no one on Audi's board is under any illusions that its team will be able to challenge the current F1 leaders in 2026. Or even in the next few years after that.

Binotto, who replaced Andreas Seidl and Oliver Hoffmann at the helm of the project, now says that it may even be seven years before the team starts winning. "It's something we're debating internally to make sure we're setting the right goals and objectives," Binotto told F1's official website, "but if you look at the past experience in F1 and all the winning team opening cycles, it took at least five to seven years to set it up."

In contrast to his predecessors, Binotto has a weighty excuse. Two years ago, when Audi bought the team, Sauber was a solid midfield contender but has since slipped to the bottom of the constructors' standings.

"You may simply say, '24 plus seven is 2031,'" Binotto said of when to expect wins. "At least not before 2030, I would say. And that's for teams who were already quite competitive. Here we're starting from one step behind with a power unit which is really starting from scratch. We know how huge the task is.

"We know how difficult it is to turn a normal team into a winning team and how long it will take. It's a business transformation, it's about people, process, methodologies, skills, mindset, facilities – it's about everything."



Binotto got to see first hand in Monza the scale of the job that he and Audi have ahead of them

A COMPLETE CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP BEFORE THE OFFICIAL START OF THE PROJECT IS NEVER A GOOD SIGN

F1 MASTERMIND

Your chosen specialised subject: the world's greatest motorsport

- Q1** Which drivers claimed Cooper's first and last world championship victories, in 1958 and 1967?
- Q2** At which two GPs in 2024 has Fernando Alonso claimed the fastest lap?
- Q3** How many GPs, out of his 38 starts, has Oscar Piastri managed to lead: 6, 7 or 8?
- Q4** Franco Colapinto is the first Argentinian to start a GP since which driver started 21 times in 2000/01?
- Q5** True or false: In the two Portuguese GPs held at the Algarve circuit in 2020 and 2021, Mercedes claimed both wins, poles and fastest laps?
- Q6** Who am I? I started 104 GPs from 1999 to 2012 for Arrows, Jaguar, McLaren, BMW-Sauber and HRT, claiming one podium and one fastest lap.
- Q7** When was the last time Ferrari won a GP from lower than Charles Leclerc's fourth at Monza?
- Q8** In which three seasons has an Adrian Newey-designed car only won one of the two championships and not the title double?
- Q9** When was the last time a driver raced for two teams in the same season?
- Q10** Two drivers started an identical 57 GPs for Arrows. Who were they?



1 Stirling Moss (1958) and Pedro Rodríguez (1967) **2** China and Austria **3** 8 Gaston Mazzacane **5** True **6** Pedro de la Rosa **7** 2013 Spanish GP (Fernando Alonso) **8** 1994, 1999, 2021 **9** Alex Albon and Pierre Gasly (Red Bull/Toro Rosso) **10** Thierry Boutsen and Riccardo Patrese

PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; ANDY HONE; SAM BLOXHAM; ZAK MAUGER; ALEXANDER TREINITZ; MOTORSPORT IMAGES ARCHIVE; F1

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SINGAPORE REMAINS AN OUTLIER FOR MAX

Winning at every grand prix venue on the regular schedule is a remarkable achievement and one Max Verstappen has in view – although he has yet to check Singapore off the list. It's one of the most challenging tests for drivers as they cope with heat and humidity for almost two hours on a bumpy, twisting surface with the concentration required to avoid errors under the lights.

An error cost Max a huge opportunity in 2022 but it wasn't his mistake. Damp qualifying encouraged teams to fuel the cars for the final session to run non-stop, yet when Max was on a blistering lap he was called into the pits by Red Bull, who had discovered he was about to run short on the required amount of fuel. Pole has been a vital part of success for over two thirds of the events held so far – and that error delivered Verstappen into an eighth-place start which led to a gain of just one position on the Sunday.

Red Bull nonetheless delivered at the end of the night. Sergio Pérez also gained only one place but, since he had lined up second and made a superb

the most successful driver in Singapore to date. His total of five wins is also backed up by the biggest climb from the back of the grid, going from 22nd to fifth in 2016 with Ferrari. His last F1 victory, in 2019, came at the same track, in a race that looked to be heading the way of Ferrari team-mate Leclerc.

That was another weekend when Leclerc was unable to convert his pole position into a race win and yet he did nothing wrong. Overtaking on the three-mile track is always difficult and emphasises the importance of pitstops and their strategic timing; Charles did everything right from the start, leading into Turn 1 and monitoring his pace to look after tyres and keeping Lewis Hamilton behind. Vettel was running third and Ferrari thought it was taking a risk with Seb by going for a relatively early pitstop to protect his position, but actually the speed on fresh tyres the four-time world champion then enjoyed allowed him to be ahead of Leclerc after both had pitted. Unlike McLaren in Hungary this year, the team didn't ask for a swap despite Charles losing out and therefore Vettel took a key win.

So Leclerc, like Verstappen, is a driver with huge incentive in Singapore. Missing out on the front row in 2023 by 0.079s to team-mate Carlos Sainz and 0.002s to George Russell led to the team

asking him to contribute to Sainz's chances by starting on soft tyres, unlike most of those around him. He grabbed second off the line, then monitored those behind to protect Sainz. Leclerc missed out on the podium, but Sainz claimed Ferrari's fourth win in the Singapore.

Four wins seems to be a key number; it's the same for Lewis Hamilton, who took three with Mercedes to add to his first at this location with McLaren in 2009, the team's one and only so far. So much of the narrative that weekend was dominated by the story of the previous year's race tactics and the departure of Flavio Briatore from his managerial role at Renault. Flavio was identified as a prime mover in the order for Nelson Piquet Jr to crash out and cause a Safety Car period which went on to allow team-mate Fernando Alonso to win the race. Briatore's return, 15 years later, as Alpine team principal coincides with McLaren's return to race-winning form at last; perhaps it might now add to its tally here.

While Fernando won that first Singapore GP from the lowest grid position of anybody so far by starting 15th on the grid, in more typical racing conditions here qualifying up front is crucial. Earlier this season Verstappen added another new success to his list when he took pole and won the Chinese GP for the first time in his career. If he can achieve his first pole in Singapore, he has every chance of hitting the 100% mark of winning at every region that has been on the calendar since 2022.



Verstappen's best result in Singapore is second behind four-time Marina Bay winner Lewis Hamilton back in 2018

start to whip past Charles Leclerc, the team was able to celebrate a fourth victory at the venue to equal Mercedes and Ferrari. Sergio's performance was one of his best wins to date; more rain on race day made it even tougher and, as the racing line dried up, the peril of stepping a few centimetres off line when being hustled by Leclerc was immense.

On top of that, a five-second penalty for Sergio towards the end of the race meant he had to push hard in the closing stages and he built just over seven seconds from Leclerc to hold on. Having taken one podium finish in the previous six races that year while Max had won five of them, suddenly Sergio had delivered a superb result; that memory may be giving him the boost he needs yet again.

Red Bull's three previous wins on the Marina Bay streets were by Sebastian Vettel, who remains

Sebastian Vettel, the very last car in shot, 22nd on the grid due to various engine penalties, fought through to finish an amazing fifth in his Ferrari in 2016



Hamilton's first win in Singapore was in 2009, his third season at McLaren. It remains McLaren's only Marina Bay victory

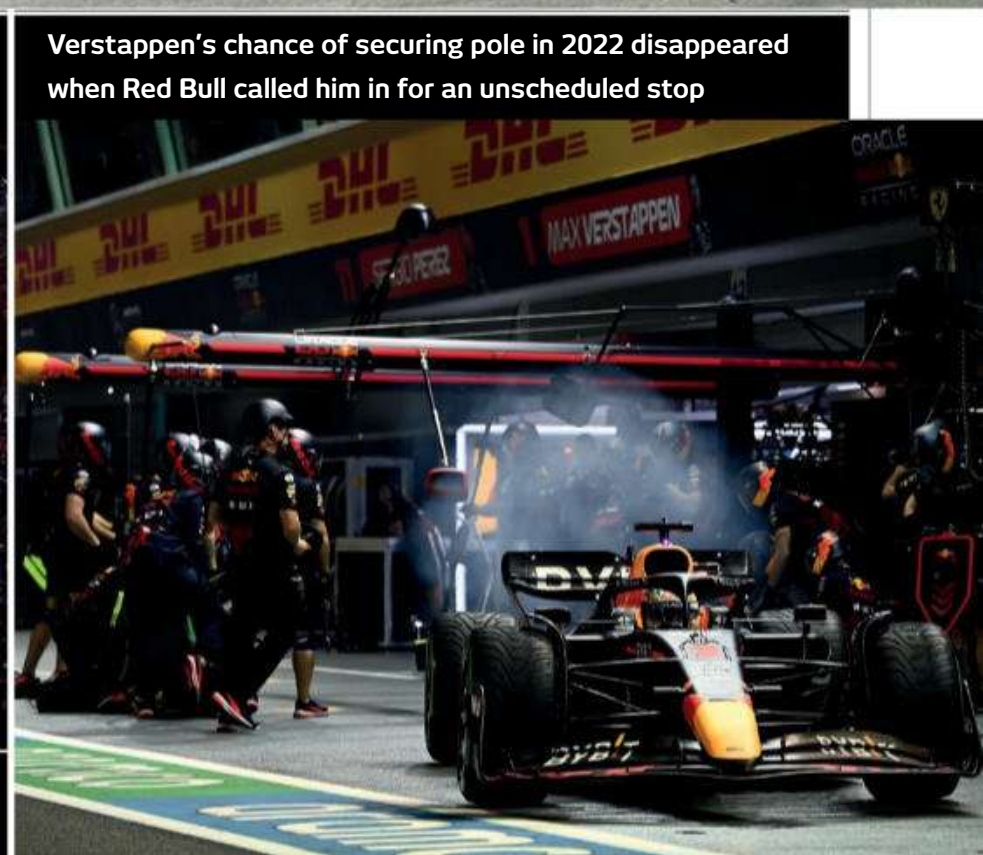


The last of Vettel's 53 GP victories was in Singapore in 2019, taking his total on the city's streets to five

Red Bull's first three wins on the Marina Bay street circuit were all achieved by Vettel. This 2013 victory was the third in a run of nine consecutive wins for Seb



Sergio Pérez's 2022 win at least meant Red Bull didn't leave Singapore empty-handed. It was the Mexican's second street circuit victory of the season after Monaco



Verstappen's chance of securing pole in 2022 disappeared when Red Bull called him in for an unscheduled stop



UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

PICTURES  **motorsport**
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relative to steel is only slightly better.

Having seen that a coil spring achieves its stiffness by the twisting of the wire from which it's formed, we can understand that a torsion bar spring is merely an unwound coil spring. There are some other subtleties such as end conditions, but a torsion bar has two distinct advantages. The first is that if one considers any device that's being twisted, the maximum deflection occurs at the outer surface, and at some point around the middle of the section no twisting is taking place. So it makes sense to remove the material from the centre, which is doing little work.

With a straight torsion bar this is a relatively simple machining

operation, but one can imagine that with a helical wound spring it would be much more difficult. This can give the torsion bar a useful weight saving over a conventional coil spring. The second advantage of a torsion bar is in packaging. All cars use some form of push or pullrod operating a rocker arm to activate the spring and damper mechanisms. Putting a torsion bar through the centre of the rocker and splined to it while anchored to the chassis or gearbox at the other end is a far neater installation than a bulky coil spring attached elsewhere on the rocker.

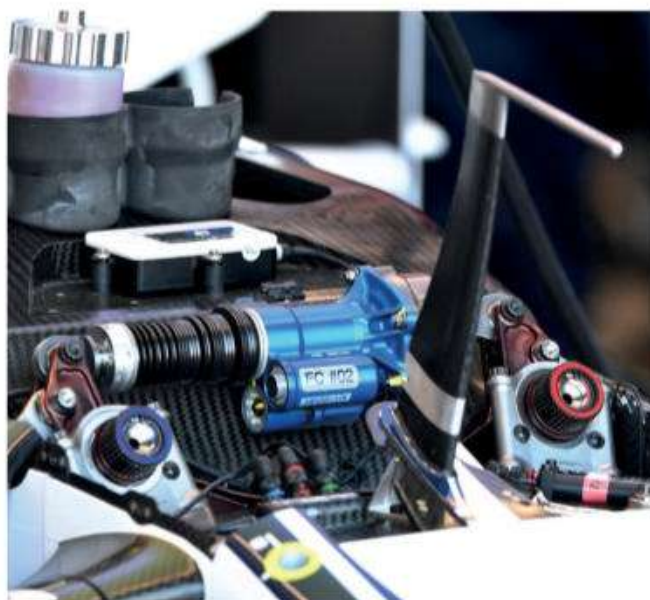
But these aren't the only form of springs to be found on an F1 car. One will often see disc springs or Belleville washers used on central heave springs. These, while slightly heavy, have the advantage of being compact in an area where space is at a premium. They can also easily be made progressive or rising rate. Aerodynamic loads increase with the square of the speed of the car and hence it is useful to have a spring that gets progressively stiffer as it deflects. This can be done geometrically by judicious positioning of the spring and push/pullrod attachments on the rocker, or by having a progressive rate spring. Disc springs achieve this by a stack of varying-thickness washers arranged such that the less stiff springs progressively lock out, leaving the stiffer springs to pick up the load.

One of the advantages Michael Schumacher's Benetton had in 1994 and 1995 was that the car was suspended on disc springs and we wrote computer codes that allowed us to calculate how to stack the springs to give us our desired ride heights ▶

TWIST AND SHOUT: HOW TORSION SPRINGS WORK

In this column we sometimes cover quite complex subjects and try to explain them in a Formula 1 context. At other times the subject may seem simple but the nuances add complexity. Equally, I always try to answer questions put to me by readers. So, let's delve into a subject which occupies the second category: torsion springs.

Before answering that question let's examine just what springs are all about. A spring is simply an elastic component that stores mechanical energy and exerts a force when it's deflected. The form of spring most people know is the coil spring which can be found in everything from a vehicle's suspension to a retractable ballpoint pen. If the spring is made of wire of a constant diameter and the coils are evenly spaced, then the spring has a constant stiffness or spring rate, normally expressed in Newtons per millimetre or pounds per inch. So, if you had a spring with a rate of



The advantages of using torsion bars (denoted by red and blue circles on this 2019 car) are weight saving and packaging

175N/mm and you put 175 Newtons (about 18kg) on the end of it, it would deflect 1mm.

What many people fail to realise is that although the spring may deflect in a straight line, it does so because each part of the coil is actually being twisted. Therefore the material property that determines stiffness is the shear modulus rather than the elastic modulus. This is why the weight saving from using titanium for springs isn't as great as one might hope – while the strength to weight ratio of titanium is significantly better than that of steel, the shear modulus to weight ratio of titanium



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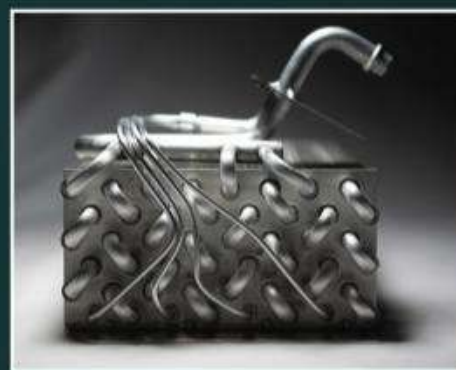
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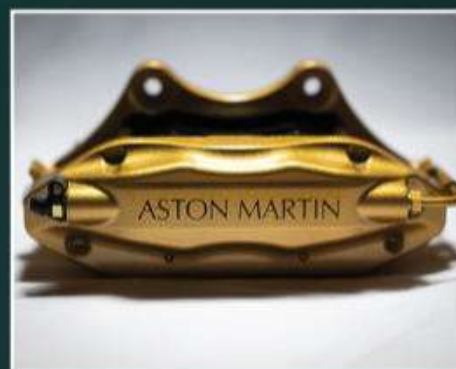
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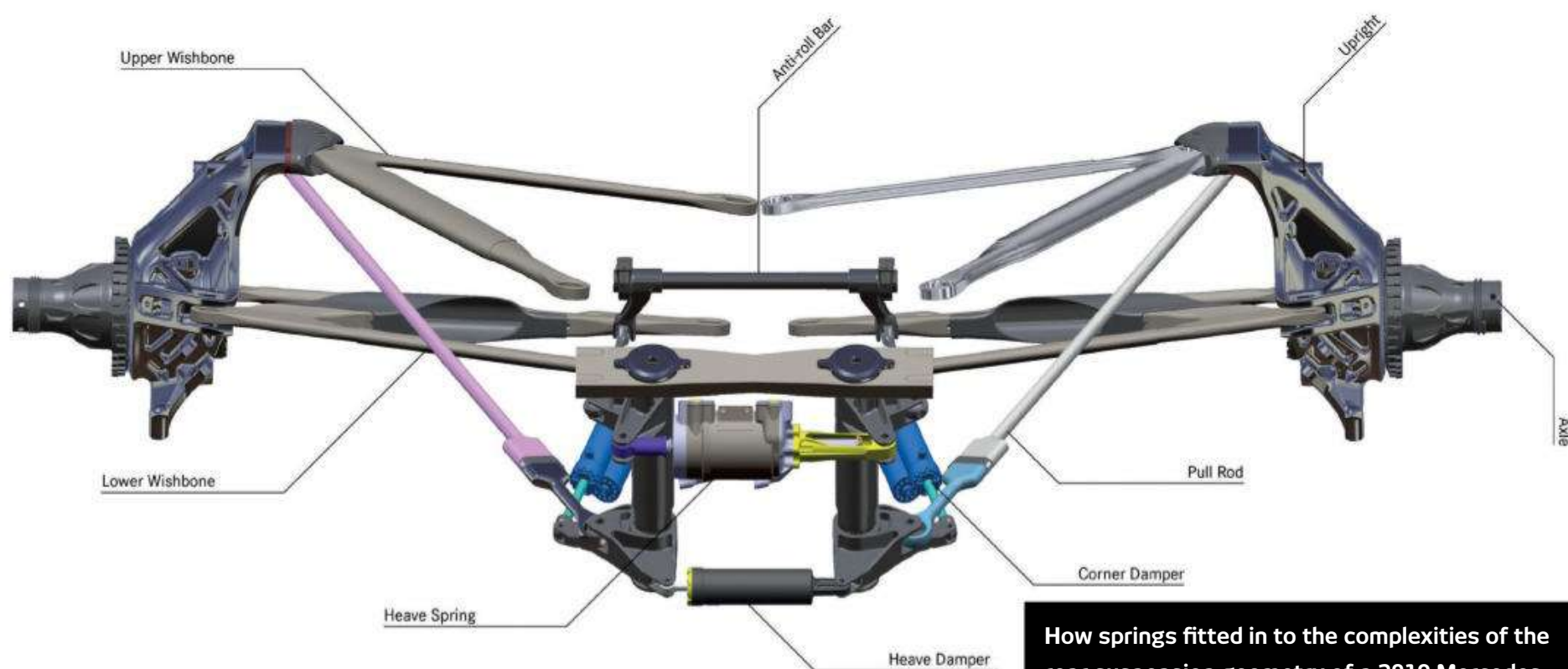
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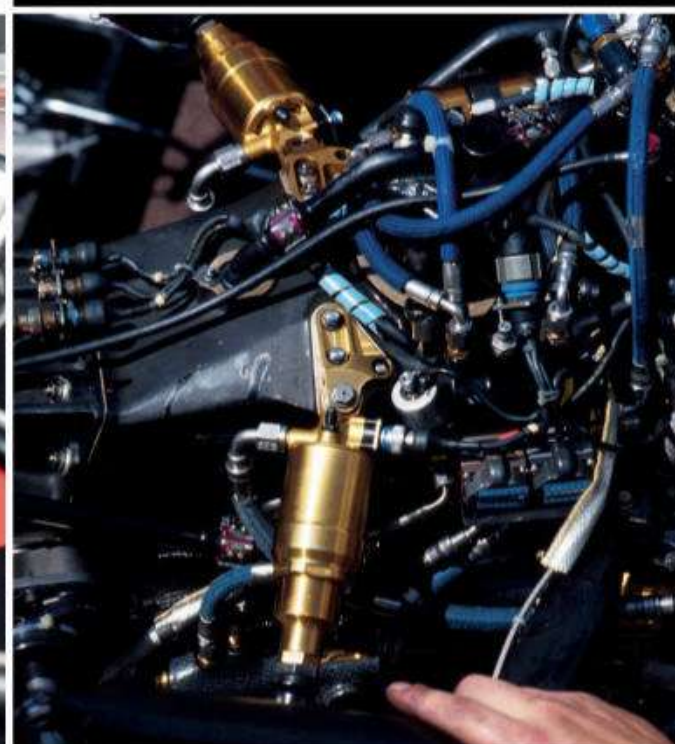
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How springs fitted in to the complexities of the rear suspension geometry of a 2019 Mercedes



An example of carbon disc springs on the horizontal heave damper in a 2019 Red Bull



The active suspension used on the Williams F15C in 1993. Gas springs were in common use in suspensions until outlawed in 2022

at different speeds to best exploit the aero map. All teams had been doing this with active suspension – but I think we were the only ones to exploit this to such an extent on a passive suspension system.

Of course there are other ways to get a progressively stiffening suspension and one that's been in use for many years is the use of bump rubbers. These are shaped elastomeric devices that are gradually compressed but, due to their shape, produce a non-linear force as a function of their displacement.

The final type of spring used on F1 cars is the gas spring. This is a personal favourite of mine and was used on both active and passively suspended cars. It has the great advantage of being very smoothly progressive and easily adjustable by altering the gas pressure, and sometimes the gas

volume, to achieve just the rate increase required. It has some disadvantages, mainly the fact that the spring rate changes with temperature, but this is easily compensated for. It was in common use until 2022 when the FIA decreed they were too complex and capable of 'hiding' unwanted characteristics.

I never felt this was the case but, nevertheless, teams are now obliged to revert to an inventory of heavy and expensive mechanical springs. The

THE GAS SPRING ISN'T COMPLETELY DEAD, HOWEVER, SINCE EVERY F1 ENGINE USES THEM INSTEAD OF COIL SPRINGS

gas spring isn't completely dead, however, since every F1 engine uses them instead of coil springs to close the inlet and exhaust valves. In this context they're infinitely superior because they're not prone to valve bounce which, for a long time, was the limiting factor for engine speed.

The humble spring, at first sight one of the more simple parts of an F1 car, hides attributes that when used correctly do much to enhance performance.

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STRAIGHT TALK

MARK GALLAGHER

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ALPINE: 16 YEARS OF LOST LESSONS

Alpine, Team Transition, is again in a state of flux, reaffirming the view that Renault just doesn't get what it takes to crack F1's competitive code.

When Flavio Briatore was forced out in the wake of the 2009 Crashgate scandal, momentarily banned from all FIA competitions for life, it's fair to say that most of us thought that would be last we'd see of him.

The man who led Benetton to back-to-back world title successes with Michael Schumacher and then Fernando Alonso would still be seen in his capacity as a driver manager. But his career as a team leader seemed to have, ahem, hit the wall.

Meanwhile 'Team Enstone' has gone on to endure a conveyor belt of senior management (and ownership) changes, one which would ultimately last a decade and a half.

Bob Bell came first, quickly handing over to Eric Boullier, who lasted for four years and a change of ownership. Genii Capital's Gérard López then took the helm until Renault's return heralded the arrival of Frédéric Vasseur, though that was short-lived.

He was replaced by Jérôme Stoll and Cyril Abiteboul, the latter leading the team until its rebranding as Alpine in 2021.

The appointment of former Suzuki MotoGP boss Davide Brivio as racing director, reporting to Alpine Cars CEO Laurent Rossi, raised eyebrows. When, a year later, Otmar Szafnauer was appointed team principal, it looked to many as though some lessons had been learned.

He survived 18 frustrating months. Meanwhile Alain Prost, ousted as an executive director, described Rossi as "...an incapable leader who thinks he can overcome his incompetence by his arrogance and his lack of humanity towards his troops".

Rossi was removed as CEO last summer and transferred to special projects, a terminal appointment in the corporate world, replaced by Philippe Krief as CEO of the F1 team with Bruno Famin made team principal. Which brings us to this summer, Briatore's return as executive advisor, Famin's departure and the arrival of Oliver Oakes from Hitech as team principal.

While Briatore's return shocked many, I was reminded by a former team principal that "in Formula 1, ethics is a county to the east of London".

As Fernando Alonso's manager Briatore built a relationship with Renault Group's CEO Luca de Meo in 2021 and 2022. During that time he offered advice on what needed to be done to make Alpine competitive.

The advice was duly ignored. Fast forward to this season and a conversation in Monaco during which de Meo admitted the team wasn't working, then asked Briatore if he would consider coming back to sort it out.

In doing so de Meo has allowed one of Formula 1's biggest beasts back into the fold, and on Briatore's terms. He has no

interest in attending 24 grands prix or fulfilling the diverse roles of modern team principal, hence the recruitment of Oakes.

What he does want to do is make the big strategic calls – looking at what works, what doesn't, and act.

This is the source of the proposal to ditch Renault's own underpowered engines in favour of a Mercedes deal for 2026. Similarly a call to see whether Adrian Newey would like to keep living in England and join a team prepared to clear a path for him to do what he loves: design winning cars and go racing.

Could it be that, 15 years after his ignominious exit, Briatore's road to rehabilitation will lead Alpine to the destination its owners crave? Interesting days lie ahead.



From Bob Bell (top) in 2009 through to the current incumbent Oliver Oakes (above), 'Team Enstone' has gone through many leaders since Briatore

THIS MONTH

Valeria Loreti

Motorsport Delivery Manager, Shell

Shell has been a Ferrari partner in Formula 1, on and off, since the 1950s, and it's recently expanded that relationship to support Maranello's Le Mans-winning Hypercar programme. It's also the sole supplier to IndyCar, the first top-level championship to embrace fully sustainable fuels – an avenue F1 will follow in 2026...

CV

2020-present

Motorsport Delivery Manager, Shell

2018-2020

Diesel Development Delivery Manager, Shell

2012-2018

Fuels Scientist, Deployment, Shell

2005-2012

Fuels Scientist, Shell Global Solutions

2003-2005

PhD Analytical chemistry, University of Mainz

1997-2002

Chemistry, University of Pisa

GP Racing: You took your current role in 2020. How has it changed from what it was before?

Valeria Loreti: The role has grown a lot. If you look back, the team looking after fuel development was absolutely focusing on Formula 1. The role I have now is much more widespread, so I'm looking from a managerial and communication and technical perspective to all the partnerships Shell is having across motorsports. It's a more holistic role. I have a bigger team than it used to be, so I'm accountable for all the operations, handling and logistics, and making things happen. I'm also accountable for the team delivering our own racing series, which is for students. It's called Shell Eco Marathon; it's an efficiency-engineering programme, but it's still about on-track competition.

GPR: People associate Shell most closely with Ferrari but may not recognise that also entails the Ferrari customers and engine partners, so you're working with 30% of the grid.

VL: The development element, we work hand-in-hand, day in, day out with Ferrari engineers, and we design our products for the Ferrari power unit. So that kind of work is done together with Ferrari exclusively. Then, obviously, if Ferrari has customer teams which use Ferrari engines, every Ferrari engine is going to work exclusively with Shell fluids and that's the link that leads us into interacting with the customer teams. That's a nice thing; you have a wider network, you can get different inputs, you have more work on track. And my team, we have the trackside laboratory, which

INTERVIEW JAMES NEUBOLD

is a small unit that contains all the necessary tools to do the fluid analysis we're required to do on track. We provide this trackside service to Ferrari, and also to its customer teams. That means that we have three times the volume of data to generate.

GPR: Given the moves towards sustainable fuels, does the work you've done as supplier of IndyCar's 'Renewable Race Fuel' help with preparations for F1 in 2026?

VL: From a fuel formulation and a fuel requirement perspective, Formula 1 and IndyCar are very, very far away. IndyCar is one fuel for all teams, in F1 every team has its dedicated and bespoke fuel formulation. IndyCar is a high ethanol-containing fuel, Formula 1 currently contains 10% ethanol. In 2026 it's just the oxygenated content which is specified, so there will be a variety of solutions. So the kind of work that goes behind it is pretty different, because the goal is different. But the knowledge, the basic blending and understanding of properties – and also the understanding of the properties of the renewable streams, what they are and how they're really delivering the greenhouse gas-saving targets – that is pretty similar. So there are some areas that overlap, but not a lot I would say. This [sustainable fuels] is a topic that's going everywhere and it's something that keeps us really on our toes – it's always a new challenge, pushing us to think out of the box and develop new solutions.

GPR: As an Italian, does the fact that the partnership is with Ferrari carry a special meaning for you?

VL: It's a very personal question, and I'll give you a very personal answer. It was a dream come true to be able to work hand-in-hand with a team I've been following for such a long time. It's also, professionally, a great satisfaction because you work on products that are deployed straight away. For me it's always been very important to be close to the delivery. I couldn't be an academic – it's too far away from delivery. In motorsport the development time frame is squeezed down from years to months, depending on which R&D project we're talking about. It's a project that gives you a lot of satisfaction: you know the results, you see this straight away – and even better when they win, it's even more exciting.



PICTURES: SHELL



WHO'S WINNING F1'S TECH WAR?



Red Bull has lost its dominant position as it, like many other teams, hits development roadblocks. We find out why motorsport's cleverest brains are struggling to add performance – and even, in many case, having to remove 'upgrades' from their cars...

WORDS JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE PICTURES



FERRARI, McLAREN, MERCEDES, ALPINE, ASTON MARTIN, HAAS, STAKE, SHUTTERSTOCK





At the height of 2023's most predictable phase, when Max Verstappen victories were as assured as death and taxes, much of the Formula 1 fanbase and fraternity medicated itself on the notion that convergence was around the corner.

This isn't the sort of pursuit that happens overnight. Red Bull's grasp of the 2022-spec aerodynamic regulations needed to be fully autopsied by the other nine teams to understand where their own interpretations had gone wrong. Even by the start of 2024 it hardly looked as though the teams had made meaningful inroads into the energy drink giant's advantage. It was hard to assume things would change either, especially on the back of three Red Bull 1-2 finishes in the opening four rounds.

Yet, in a surprisingly sudden twist, everything changed. Sure, it wasn't quite an instant swing – instead Red Bull's lead slowly dissipated into the ether, accompanied by squeaky bums on the pitwall. The matte-blue, yellow-nosed RB20s were no longer odds-on favourites to clean house throughout the remainder of 2024; Ferrari, McLaren and Mercedes have all taken wins away from Verstappen thanks to their progress over the season – and Red Bull's comparative lack of it.

Red Bull knew it would be this way. A crossover point was always going to materialise when the crux of the current-gen regulations eventually became clear, be it through the sheer force of development will, or from piecing together Red Bull's floor concepts through photographs of Sergio Pérez's car dangling from a crane...

Even if convergence was anticipated, albeit accompanied by Red Bull's higher-ups mockingly suggesting they were surprised it had taken the others so long to catch up, that

doesn't mean the team is pleased with its here-and-now. Indeed, technical director Pierre Wache's comments prior to the mid-season break laid bare his dissatisfaction with the team's dwindling power.

"I would say [we're] not really [happy]," Wache explained. "We improved compared with last year, without doubt, but we didn't deliver what we expected in some areas – especially in the high-speed corners, we expected a little bit more. Without thinking about the competitiveness of the car, so just based on our own references, we expected a little bit more with our tools."

Red Bull still has an excellent car, relatively speaking. It's a multiple race winner, used to devastating effect by Verstappen in the early-season run. But, against its 2023 record, Red Bull cannot see that the RB20 is anything more than a disappointment. The in-season improvement of the other teams is moot when viewed through the lens of a hyper-competitive racing outfit, for it hasn't matched the time gain the likes of McLaren and Mercedes have achieved.

Where Red Bull has fallen in comparison with its nearest rivals has its genesis in 2023's Singapore Grand Prix. In a season where Red Bull probably could have won every other race from the back of the grid, it flopped at Marina Bay and neither car could progress from Q2 on genuine pace. The team's hopes of going one better than McLaren in 1988 and winning every race in a season were derailed, not because of a Jean-Louis Schlesser-esque moment, but because of its own weakness in bumpy, short-radius corners.

Those are the kinds of corners that need ▶

1. Aston Martin's Imola upgrade package, which included a new floor, was not a success and made the car more difficult to drive

2. RB's first upgrade hit was in Spain but, it too, failed to deliver. Trials in Austria and Britain found that the new floor was the issue

3. Williams had to focus the first part of the season on trimming weight from the FW46 before it could do anything else

4. Sauber (Stake) went for a radical sidepod design at the start of the season but it has had little effect on the team's competitiveness





The weakness that is hampering Red Bull this season first showed up in Singapore in 2023 when the RB19 was unable to deal with the track's bumps





plenty of compliance, an innate kinematic framework that allows a car to glide over bumps and kerbs. This is in contrast to the accepted conditions needed for a ground-effect style floor to work, where stiffly sprung suspension keeps the car at a consistent height. It should be possible to swing between the two with a wide set-up window, and Ferrari, Mercedes, and McLaren did that weekend. Red Bull could not.

And it's a problem that seems to persist with

the RB20. On the flat, even surfaces of Bahrain and Jeddah, it looked unassailable as the car could work within comfortable boundaries. Even without Verstappen's brake failure in Melbourne, the bumpier climes of Albert Park presented further challenges for Red Bull. Imola and Monaco exposed growing concerns with the car's kerb-strike ability and difficulty contending with short-apex corners when the downforce hasn't been steadily accrued by the floor.

McLaren, meanwhile, has been able to develop a car that matches Red Bull in the faster bits but is much more effective in slower conditions. Note its 1-2 in Hungary. Contentious as the final finishing order was, the result rather underlined the Woking team's development over the year. The MCL38 seems to be a bit easier to handle in corners that require a lot of changes in direction and kerb-wrangling, suggesting there's a bit more give in the suspension package.

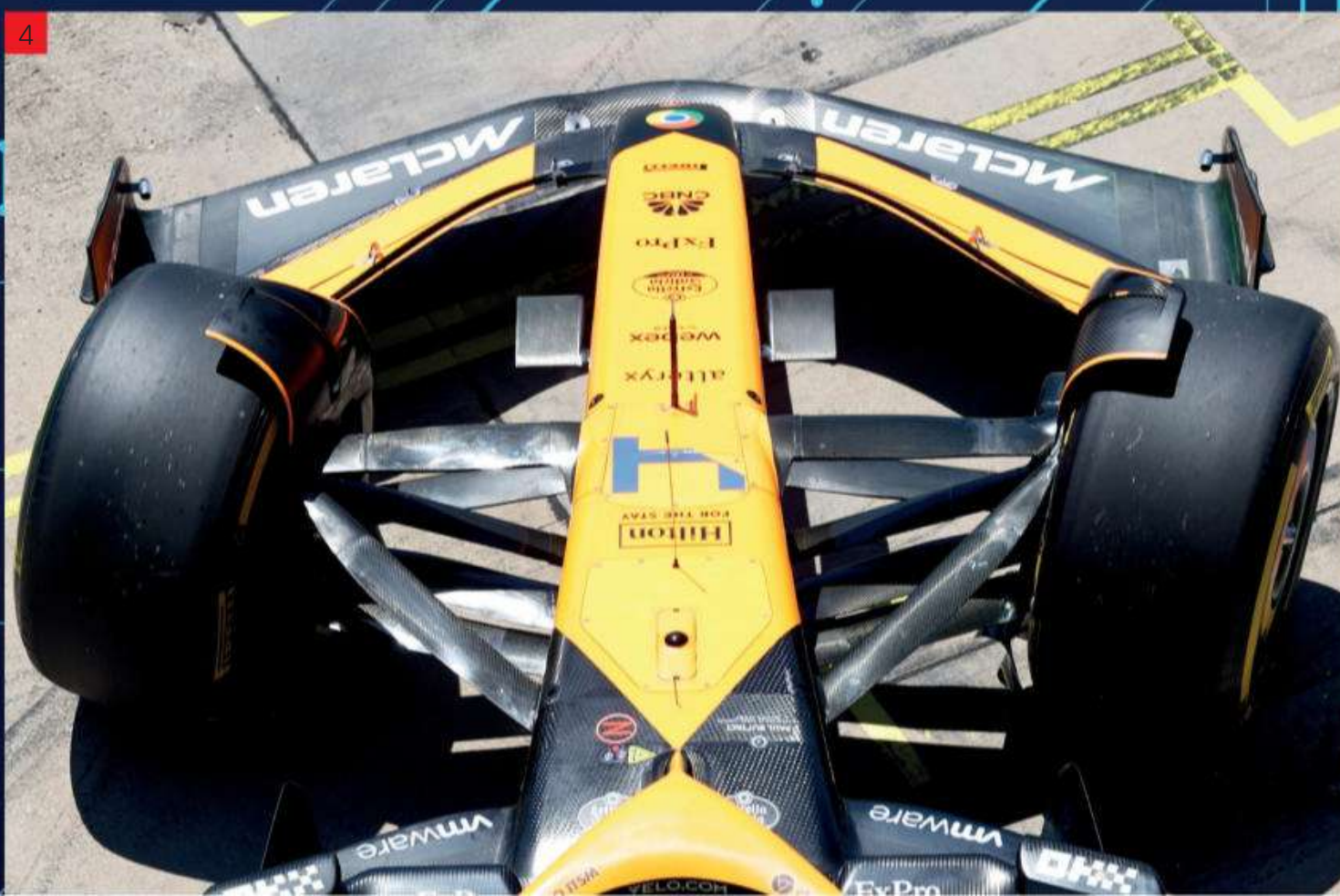


1. Mercedes started 2024 with this radical front wing but ditched it for a more conventional one for Canada, which greatly improved performance

2. A British GP upgrade to the floor of the VF-24 has helped Haas to continue its progress up the grid, albeit from a low starting point

3. Like Williams, Alpine's concern at the start of 2024 was the weight of the A524. A lighter floor in China set the ball rolling on the car's diet

4. McLaren's major upgrade package, delivered in Miami, was huge and involved new suspension as well as revised aero



Mercedes has made progress too, as it continues to widen its setup window. Assessing the W15's evolution from lower-top-10 mainstay to three-time winner, it rather underlines a crucial effect that teams are cottoning onto in the third iteration of these cars: the significance of front wing development. Certainly, front wings have always been important, having the dual role of providing front-end downforce and dictating airflow to the rest of the car, but their impact on the floor has perhaps been underestimated until now.

This comes amid the usual returning debate over flexi-wings, where teams are understood

to be using aeroelasticity within the regulatory bounds to improve their aerodynamic platform. Linking the front wing to the floor has become of paramount importance, but this might be a result of converging development rather than a cause thereof – according to RB technical chief Jody Egginton.

“As people are converging on optimised areas of the car, it's natural that the wing becomes a thing to facilitate further development,” Egginton says. “That's certainly what we found. Had the floor potentially taken more precedent and authority over the front wing early on? Yeah, I can believe that. But as people get more

optimised, there's some convergence and people are focusing on different things.”

The impact of new infrastructure is also beginning to show; McLaren is reaping the rewards of its new windtunnel, while Red Bull – Wache reckons – feels that the impact of the aerodynamic testing restrictions are starting to bite more because the team's windtunnel is comparatively older. Small wonder, then, that Aston Martin is eagerly anticipating its own coming online next year.

Max might remain odds-on for a fourth title but, if this period of convergence is a prelude to an explosive 2025, a fifth might have to wait... ▶

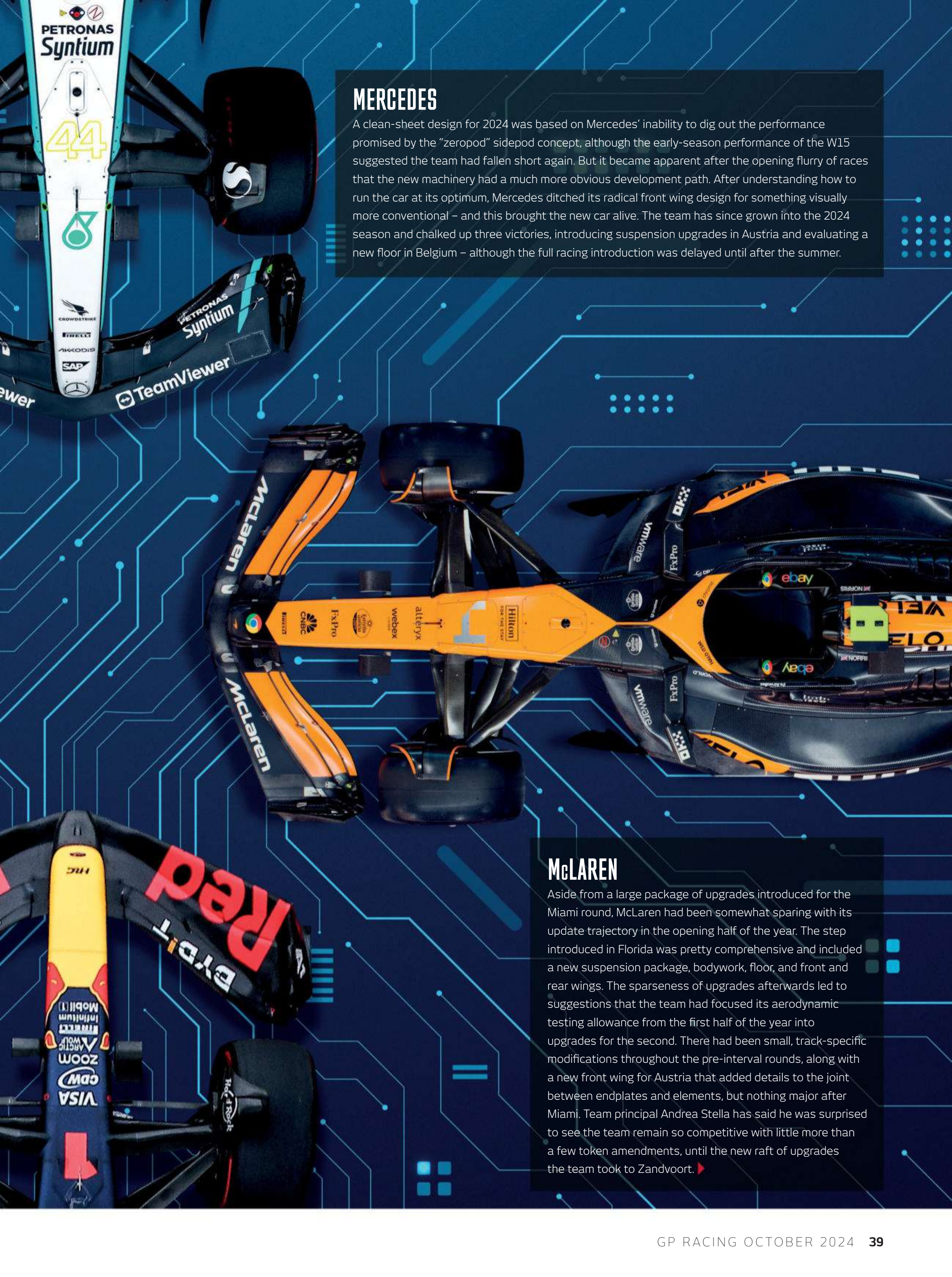
New infrastructure is important in tech developments. McLaren is definitely benefitting from its new windtunnel being operational

FERRARI

Ferrari started the year with a car that was clearly very strong in low-speed corners, and general performance appeared to pick up from a strong end to 2023. But high-speed corners have proven to be problematic, and a floor upgrade introduced at Imola seemed to introduce bouncing around those turns. Instead of alleviating the issues, further floor changes for Barcelona rather exacerbated the problem, and the team rolled back on that underbody for Silverstone to quell the SF-24's instability. The Prancing Horse pushed out another version for Hungary, and the drivers continued to experience bouncing as the fuel burned off in Belgium – although, according to Charles Leclerc, it “wasn’t crazy”. Regardless, the car fell from the second-fastest prospect at the start of the year, to the fourth by the summer break.

RED BULL

Many wondered how Red Bull would move the game on once again after its RB19 had conquered all before it across 2023. The new RB20 was visually very different from its predecessor, with overbite sidepod inlets and the high-shouldered engine cover that looked similar to Mercedes’ design from last year. Further additions have been made throughout the year, with the addition of small inlets to either side of the cockpit, and a Hungary bodywork overhaul that deleted the cannon-like outlets from the engine cover. But it seems Red Bull had hit something of a design ceiling heading into the break, and the upgrades introduced through the first half of the year had done little to preserve the team’s advantage over McLaren and Mercedes. The team is largely getting the most out of its machinery, but it no longer has the fastest piece of kit.



MERCEDES

A clean-sheet design for 2024 was based on Mercedes' inability to dig out the performance promised by the "zeropod" sidepod concept, although the early-season performance of the W15 suggested the team had fallen short again. But it became apparent after the opening flurry of races that the new machinery had a much more obvious development path. After understanding how to run the car at its optimum, Mercedes ditched its radical front wing design for something visually more conventional – and this brought the new car alive. The team has since grown into the 2024 season and chalked up three victories, introducing suspension upgrades in Austria and evaluating a new floor in Belgium – although the full racing introduction was delayed until after the summer.

McLAREN

Aside from a large package of upgrades introduced for the Miami round, McLaren had been somewhat sparing with its update trajectory in the opening half of the year. The step introduced in Florida was pretty comprehensive and included a new suspension package, bodywork, floor, and front and rear wings. The sparseness of upgrades afterwards led to suggestions that the team had focused its aerodynamic testing allowance from the first half of the year into upgrades for the second. There had been small, track-specific modifications throughout the pre-interval rounds, along with a new front wing for Austria that added details to the joint between endplates and elements, but nothing major after Miami. Team principal Andrea Stella has said he was surprised to see the team remain so competitive with little more than a few token amendments, until the new raft of upgrades the team took to Zandvoort. ▶

ASTON MARTIN

Like Ferrari, Aston Martin introduced a new aero package at Imola with the hope of moving its season along, only to find out that it had brought ill effects to the surface. The combination of a new front wing, floor, and sidepod/engine cover had made the car a lot more difficult to drive. Fernando Alonso's wayward weekend in Italy rather demonstrated the precariousness of the recently upgraded AMR24. The team introduced a new front wing for Silverstone, and it helped pause a difficult run – but the fact it has had to run its drivers with different specs in the same track sessions suggests it doesn't fully trust its simulation tools. Aston sits in technical limbo, awaiting completion of its new windtunnel, while new ex-Ferrari recruit Enrico Cardile will put his stamp on the team's progress moving into 2025. And, if speculation is to be believed, there may well be more additions to its tech line-up...



HAAS

The American squad anticipated that it would start the year at the back of the grid, but steady progress under new team principal Ayao Komatsu has defied those lowly expectations. Komatsu focused upon improving the relationships between its UK-based staff and the Italy-based design team and, rather than regress over the season, the team's developments have taken it in the right direction. A British GP upgrade to the floor helped to alleviate a previous characteristic of it shedding downforce in high-speed corners, leading stalwart Kevin Magnussen to note "it's the first time in Haas's history that we brought upgrades to the car that made it faster". Part of Komatsu's remit was to make sure the team was more efficient with its admittedly smaller resources, and he appears to have made a strong start.



RB

The late-season surge the team formerly known as AlphaTauri enjoyed in 2023 provided a handy basis for this season, as its prowess in low-speed corners helped set a foundation for the incoming VCARB 01 to work from. The car has been demonstrably the sixth-fastest package of the year, although suffered a hit with a Barcelona package that failed to deliver as expected. A series of trials in Austria and at Silverstone led the team to determine that the new floor was the root cause, although technical director Jody Egginton noted that there were elements which would play into an updated design. The team's aim is now to continue to build its performance in other areas without losing its slow-speed gains, as it seeks to lock down sixth in the championship over Haas. ▶





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ALPINE


Promising a “brand new car, front to back”, Alpine launched its new A524 distinctly short on livery. It didn’t take long to find out why: the car was reportedly 10kg overweight and considerably short on downforce. Technical director Matt Harman and aero lead Dirk de Beer left, and a restructuring of the engineering department into a technical triumvirate coincided with a concerted effort to slash the excess weight. A lighter floor for China set the changes into motion and weight-shedding exercises have extended into the chassis itself. With the technical department now led by David Sanchez, formerly of Ferrari, the team is continuing to bolt more downforce onto the car – with a view to those changes feeding into its 2025 design.

WILLIAMS

The previous Williams cars were considered one-trick ponies, with great straightline speed but lacking in the corners. Thus, a change of design direction had been instigated by team principal James Vowles and technical chief Pat Fry to build a car for all weathers – but the first iteration didn’t offer an initial step up in performance. It emerged in Imola that Williams’ FW46 had – like Alpine – been running overweight, and the team’s development efforts over the first half of the year had been spent mitigating that. Thus, laptime gains have largely come from putting the car on a diet rather than genuine aerodynamic progress. Upgrades are planned for the second half of the season before attention switches to 2025.



SAUBER

Whatever Sauber has thrown at its C44 chassis – new front wings, sidepod and bodywork updates, et cetera – has barely changed the course of a car destined to prop up the championship order before the summer break. Although the heavily sculpted sidepods and aggressive front wing design had turned some heads at the start of the year, the performance yield was limited. Rather, the team’s best chances were frittered away by early-season teething issues in the pitlane, as newly designed pit equipment came with glitches that reared their heads at inopportune times. Zhou Guanyu also took a new chassis at Imola, which he reckoned had made the handling of the car much more difficult to contend with. He thus swapped back to the old one in Spain, returning comfort but with few results to show for it. 



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CARLOS SAINZ

As he embarks on his final few races as a Ferrari driver, Carlos talks for the first time about his reasons for choosing Williams over Alpine or Audi for next year and beyond – and whether Ferrari has got to the bottom of its development woes this season...

What was the decisive factor for you in choosing Williams for next year?

First of all, I think it was important for me to take the decision before the summer break. It's been a very tough seven months of my career where I had to deal with everything that happened in January, in combination with having to perform and deliver as a Ferrari driver in a high-pressure, high-tension environment in Ferrari, and having to decide my future. You're talking to so many other teams, analysing and putting everything on the table at the same time as you're competing.

And when I took the decision, I wanted to be 100% convinced. That's why I gave myself plenty of time. And I took that decision because Williams is the team that, from the beginning, I had very good feelings and very good conversations with. I think it's going to be an interesting few years in my career.

Your career has been moving forwards. You've been fighting for podiums and wins in the past few years. In all fairness, Williams probably won't be fighting for wins next year. Do you think that's going to be hard to adjust to?

No, no, because – I'm being very honest with you, I've been in 10 years in F1, eight of them I haven't fought for wins, and two of them, two or three, I have. So I've actually spent more time *not* fighting for wins. And F1 for me is a lot about extracting the maximum from the car. The result really isn't purely dependent on the athlete and on the driver. It's depending on the machinery you drive. And it's also all about how I'm gonna help the Williams project to move forward.

That really motivates me – I want to feel listened to, like I can help. And this in a team, such a historic team, like Williams, which has

such a clear vision, and they're super-committed to bringing the team back to the front with very clear investment partners. It's something that was important for me. And the results are... for 2025 I know there might not be wins or podiums, but I think we can do a good job.

When did you become 100% sure Williams was the right place to be? And was the stability compared with your other options a factor?

For sure stability. I took the decision around the Spa week... so it was late. But I've always had the feeling during all those negotiations, I always kept Williams in the back of my head, because I always had that good feeling with James [Vowles] and the investment group Dorilton. I've learnt over the years in F1 to trust in my feeling about people.

I remember when I left McLaren in 2020 I had the feeling that the team was moving forward and was going to be successful in the future. Having spent time working with Zak Brown, Andrea Stella, I said they might not be winning next year or the following, but this team with these people are going to be winning soon. And four years later, they're performing at an incredibly high level. And now I have this feeling about people and the culture in Williams. I need to trust that feeling. And this is what I committed to.

WILLIAMS IS THE TEAM THAT, FROM THE BEGINNING, I HAD VERY GOOD FEELINGS AND VERY GOOD CONVERSATIONS WITH

James Vowles said the first approach he made was in Abu Dhabi last year, and that you were the number-one choice for him. Just how important was James's role in that, in securing the contract?

It was very important. Obviously, he's the leader of the project, and he has the vision. He did a very good job in that sense, sharing the vision he has for the team with me.

I think we're relatively similar characters in terms of we're both very analytical, very fair and open. And he convinced me, simple as that.

In terms of Ferrari, what's been the main development focus during the summer break?

The team did their analysis of the first half of season, and I think what's important for us is after the issues we had with our upgrades, is to understand them fully and make sure our next bits of upgrades are going in the direction we really need.

Because it's super clear that our rivals have done a very good job in that sense, both Mercedes and McLaren have outdeveloped us and Red Bull in a way. They seem to be very competitive. If we want to get back in the fight we need to understand why we didn't fully find the performance we wanted from the upgrades.

Where do you think that understanding is now? How realistic is it between now and the end of the season to get the car competitive?

I believe the understanding is there, and we've understood exactly what went wrong with the few bits that didn't work as we expected. Whether we're capable or we have enough time to put enough performance into the car to revert that time loss is yet to be seen.

SAINZ OF THE TIMES

It took him long enough – but, over the summer, Carlos Sainz confirmed a long-term deal with Williams. Why did the doors to Mercedes and Red Bull remain closed? And why choose Williams over a more recent winning team and one with the vast resources of the Volkswagen Group behind it?

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“ONE OF THE TOP FOUR DRIVERS, if not at times the number two driver on the grid.”

While you might have to tip your head to one side and gently stroke your chin while parsing the somewhat curious phrasing of this sentence, you can see what Williams team principal James Vowles is getting at, why he views the signing of Carlos Sainz as such a significant step for his team – and why he remains surprised none of the leading outfits beat him to Carlos’s signature.

And while Sainz himself might, like any self-respecting racing driver, cavil at this definition of his status oscillating between points four and two without ever hitting the peak, it’s not inaccurate.

Carlos arrived in F1 at the same time – 2015 – and in the same team, as Max Verstappen,

although they were at different points in their single-seater journey. Sainz had five years’ experience to Max’s one and was the Formula Renault 3.5 champion, while Verstappen had been runner-up to Esteban Ocon in European F3. Nevertheless Team Max had the upper hand politically in what was then known as Scuderia Toro Rosso: Red Bull’s ‘motorsport advisor’ Helmut Marko had long been convinced Verstappen was the standout talent of his generation and Max’s father Jos had played Red Bull, Mercedes and Ferrari off against each other exquisitely to get him under contract. On track Sainz and Verstappen were quite evenly matched; Carlos had a slight edge in qualifying, Max in the races, although Sainz’s DNF’s have



PICTURES: GLENN DUNBAR; LIONEL NG; CHARLES COATES



skewed perceptions of their time together very much in Verstappen's favour. After a year-and-a-quarter their paths diverged as Max was elevated to the senior squad and Carlos remained parked at Toro Rosso.

Via Renault and McLaren Sainz went to Ferrari where he has won three grands prix and beaten his highly rated team-mate Charles Leclerc in the drivers' standings once. There's no doubt that over a single lap Leclerc is one of the fastest drivers in the business, but it's difficult to define the margins between him and Sainz because of the oscillating nature of Ferrari's technical development. Its 2023 car was difficult to drive and the team's attempts to dial out its cantankerousness while retaining speed tended to favour whichever of the two drivers could handle its characteristics on a given weekend. Nevertheless, at the end of the season Ferrari chose to put Leclerc on a long-term contract and then sign Lewis Hamilton for 2025, dumping Carlos onto the job market.

So, yes, perhaps not the first or even second choice for a top team, but surely his track record would tempt *one* of them? Surprisingly not – but the reasons for Red Bull and Mercedes not signing Sainz, despite having potential vacancies earlier this year, are more nuanced.

Shout to the top

Even before the new deals for Leclerc and Hamilton were announced, Vowles had opened a dialogue with Sainz. They met first at last year's season-closing Abu Dhabi GP. As befits a former engineer best known for his long stint in charge of Mercedes' race strategy, Vowles is accustomed to juggling probabilities over a long time frame. "Direction of travel" is a phrase he frequently deploys and it aptly sums up his approach to deal-making: a long courtship rather than take-it-or-leave-it. Last season several months elapsed between his first approach to Pat Fry, then Alpine's technical director, and Fry deciding to become Williams' chief technical officer.

Equally you might say Williams is a harder sell to a competitive driver or engineer than a top-tier team, given its recent back-of-the-grid history and the substantial challenges that lie ahead. But in tying up these high-profile recruitments Vowles is repositioning Williams as a team with top-tier ambitions rather than one that's merely happy to make up the numbers and earn an easy



“LOOK AT EVERY TEAM HE HAS BEEN IN. THEY’VE IMPROVED SIGNIFICANTLY – AND I GET WHY. AFTER SPENDING THE PAST NINE MONTHS TALKING TO HIM AT LEAST WEEKLY, WHAT I’VE REALISED IS THAT HE’S A PERFORMANCE MACHINE”

living in the mid-grid under F1’s more equitable post-Ecclestone commercial terms. As Fry himself said last year – at the same race weekend the dance with Sainz began – he left Alpine because “I didn’t feel there was the enthusiasm or the drive to move forward beyond fourth [in the constructors’ championship]... I want to be pushing things forward, I don’t just want to sit there and not be able to do things.”

When Vowles spoke for the first time after announcing Sainz’s imminent move to Williams, he followed this theme: “If you’re going to go for an individual who’s going to make the difference, I’m not just focused on how quick he is in the

Sainz and Sainz Senior come as a package and have done so since Junior first made it to F1



car. I’m focused on how he is as a personality. This also includes how his entourage is, which includes his manager [his cousin, Carlos Oñoro], and his father – his father is as performance-driven as Junior, he’s an incredible character. The three of them come together as a package, and that’s what we need here in Williams.

“Look at every team he has been in. They’ve improved significantly – and I get why. After spending the past nine months talking to him at least weekly, what I’ve realised is that he’s a performance machine.

“He will do everything in his power to transform himself and the team around him. And that’s powerful. That’s worth more than what he can drive the car at. Why wouldn’t you want that in your stable?”

At the moment Williams only has one driver with the capacity to score points. Having one of Sainz’s calibre in the other garage potentially takes the ‘direction of travel’ into a virtuous circle: it energises personnel who have been treading water while Logan Sargeant floundered ineffectually at the back of the field; and outside the garage it makes Williams a more credible destination for high-calibre tech personnel and commercial partners.

Stairway to heaven

Completing the deal still required a long journey from that first encounter in Abu Dhabi, where for the sake of secrecy the Sainz entourage had to sneak in the Williams motorhome via the tradesmen’s entrance and go up the back stairway to Vowles’ office. It was never a given that Sainz would take up the offer, despite the subsequent shock of being shown the door at Ferrari.

Both sides had more proverbial irons in the fire, though it’s clear that for Williams keeping the struggling Logan Sargeant was far down the options list. Vowles has likened the process of watching the various driver-market permutations develop to a game of chess. As Sainz held out for openings at Red Bull and Mercedes, Audi and Alpine also entered the frame.

While Mercedes had a clear vacancy, it became clear early on that Merc boss Toto Wolff’s ‘Plan A’ was to promote Andrea Kimi Antonelli from F2 – although Wolff briefly entertained the notion of him having a ‘learning year’ at Williams. That possibility was solid enough for Vowles to support an easing of the superlicence restrictions. ▶



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Sainz was wary of returning to the Red Bull fold with Max Verstappen still in situ after their time together as team-mates at Toro Rosso

The Red Bull scenario was more nuanced. At the time a power struggle was playing out involving the new bosses of the parent company, the Yoovidhya family which has a majority shareholding in Red Bull, team principal Christian Horner, Helmut Marko and the Verstappens. Against a tapestry of intrigue involving Horner's personal life, and threats that Max might trigger an exit clause if Marko were to be fired, Horner began to make positive noises about Sainz's possible return to the Red Bull fold. And even as the 'Maxcit' scenario became less plausible, Sergio Pérez's wavering performances suggested a vacancy in the number-two garage might be in the offing.

But this required Sainz to balance his desire for a competitive car against the potential for rekindled aggro with Team Verstappen. It's known that on more than one occasion in the Toro Rosso days, Jos lobbied for Max to have more optimal run plans in practice and qualifying and got the go-ahead from Marko, overruling team principal Franz Tost in the process. That was a decade ago and the Verstappens have only grown more powerful since. Adrian Newey's imminent departure and Red Bull's faltering form added to the demerit column.

Famously, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the titular prince identifies something rotten in the state of Denmark and then spends the majority of the play procrastinating over what to do about it. Likewise Sainz drove the other drivers on the

Vowles played a long game with Sainz, much as he did with his approaches to Pat Fry in 2023



“FROM THE BEGINNING I GAVE HIM WARTS-AND-ALL ‘HERE’S WHAT’S GOING TO HAPPEN’. WE ARE GOING TO GO BACKWARDS. HERE’S WHY. HERE’S WHAT WE’RE INVESTING IN. HERE’S WHAT’S COMING. HERE’S WHY I’M EXCITED BY THIS PROJECT, AND IT’S YOUR CHOICE IF YOU WANT TO BE A PART OF IT”

market – Vowles too, probably – to distraction by vacillating for the first half of the season. While Marko spoke of Carlos having “a very lucrative offer from Audi that we can’t match or beat”, there was no urge to put pen to paper.

That, it turns out, was because of the ongoing dialogue with Williams, via late-night phone calls and clandestine hotel meetings, along with a late bid from Alpine once Flavio Briatore slipped his tasselled loafers under a desk at Enstone. For Sainz and his entourage this presented a tough set of choices to unpick: Alpine remains stuck in beta; Audi-owned Sauber, currently racing as Stake, has failed to recruit or add performance

to its car this year, and its most senior managers have been locked in a fruitless civil war; and Williams is struggling to achieve lift-off from the back end of the grid since its car has come in overweight, a legacy of having to focus resources on changing outdated production-management methods.

“From the beginning I gave him warts-and-all ‘Here’s what’s going to happen,’” says Vowles. “We are going to go backwards. Here’s why. Here’s what we’re investing in. Here’s what’s coming. Here’s why I’m excited by this project, and it’s your choice if you want to be a part of it.

“And he’s been pretty consistent in his messaging back, which is here is all the positives of all these other entities that you can’t see because you wear a Williams shirt. And my job back in return is to say here are the positives of Williams and here’s the difference. I’ve never changed on what those positives are.”

Where Williams scores at a high level is that its direction of travel – that phrase again – towards recovery is further advanced than Alpine or Audi. It has an engaged owner, Dorilton Capital, which doesn’t want to ‘flip’ the team for a quick profit, has made the right key recruitments to take the team forwards, and doesn’t interfere in the day-to-day running. Alpine and Audi have both recently hit the reset button, in Alpine’s case not for the first time. Hence Sainz has committed to at least two seasons – and wanted the news out there.

“The message that it was 2025 and 2026 and beyond didn’t come from us,” says Vowles. “It came from Carlos. He wanted it to be abundantly clear that he’s committed and this is where he wanted to be.” 



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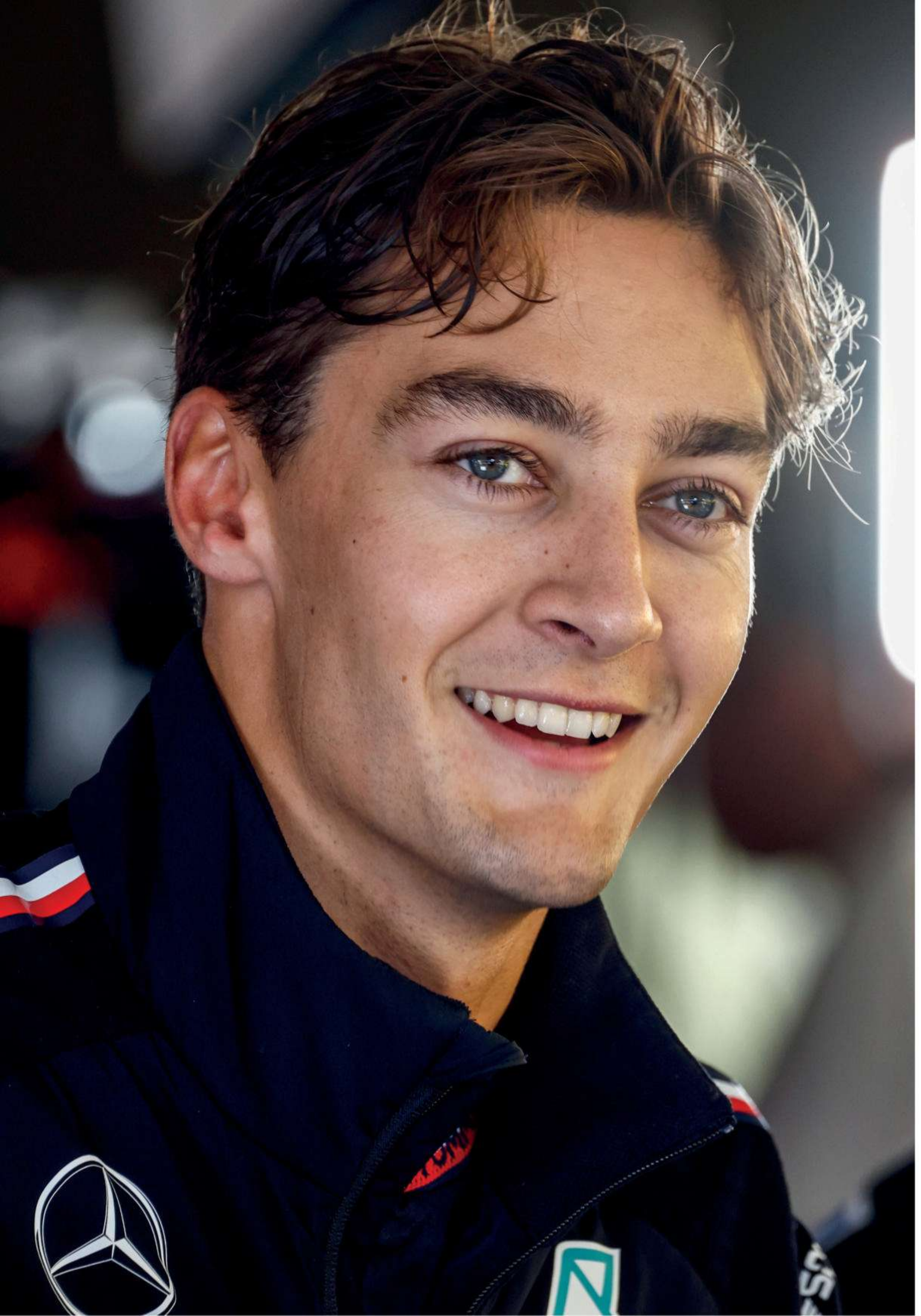
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Mercedes has started to get on top of its car troubles – to the extent that **Lewis Hamilton**, watching Ferrari's pace swing wildly, is palpably having second thoughts about his move. It's time for **George Russell** to establish himself as team leader – especially as his boss continues to publicly woo Max Verstappen...

“WITHOUT DOUBT.”

George Russell is unequivocal the performance that earned his 2024 Belgian Grand Prix 'victory' was one of his best ever in Formula 1. He might have lost his stunning on-the-road victory at Spa-Francorchamps over his car/driver weight total being found to be 1.5kg under the limit post-race, but it was nevertheless a statement drive.

Russell had ended up in a winning position that day because he'd understood and then committed to a surprise one-stop strategy that his Mercedes squad had previously discounted. Ultimately, that ended up being part of his disqualification too, since his second-stint tyres wore and lost plenty of mass, likely accounting for much of that missing 1.5kg. But Russell's decisiveness had been key and it ended with long-time race-leader Lewis Hamilton defeated and initially dejected.

Hamilton is now a five-time winner at the Belgian GP. And while some may say this was payback of sorts for Lewis's lost 2008 Spa win, it remains a shock to the system that Max Verstappen lost a three-year winning streak at his other 'home' track to Mercedes in 2024. Because while there were elements of fortune in this result

(Verstappen's engine-change grid penalty meaning he dropped down from pole in Spa), the fallen giant is back on its feet after two barren seasons in the ground-effect era.

Russell took pole at Montréal and Silverstone, won in Austria after Verstappen and Lando Norris collided, and Hamilton took that emotion-soaked victory in the British GP. Again, fortune slices its way through these results for the Silver Arrows squad, but these successes banished the memories of Mercedes' third successive underwhelming start to a campaign. The team highlighting a different problem at seemingly every race through the early rounds headed into the summer break having won three from four. Even at Zandvoort, where tyre-degradation issues led to an underwhelming result, it showed flashes of pack-heading pace.

STEP IT UP

Hamilton's Silverstone win drew inevitable questions regarding possible regrets about his upcoming Ferrari move. Even less surprising was how he returned serve so swiftly with rejecting answers. Although the team that really forged

Lewis's F1 legend is winning regularly again, there's just no stopping that blockbuster move. Therefore, is Russell ready to step up and lead Mercedes?

Since being promoted from Williams to race alongside Hamilton in 2022, George has always insisted it's a privilege to learn from statistically F1's greatest ever driver. That to be the best, one must beat the best. But in his now-confirmed 2025 team-mate – Formula 2 racer and Mercedes junior Andrea Kimi Antonelli, who appeared for the first time in official F1 action when he drove in FP1 at Monza – Russell will have different circumstances to master.

In promoting Antonelli Mercedes boss Toto Wolff is breaking with a long stretch of team history. Not since Karl Kling's debut in 1954 has Mercedes run a rookie driver in one of its cars (although the BAR iteration of its current squad gave first F1 outings to Ricardo Zonta and Anthony Davidson in 1999 and 2005 respectively). Inevitably, there will be spills alongside the expected thrills – something a recovering team can ill afford if, as is hoped, the performance convergence from 2024 translates into a multi-team title battle next year.

It was striking how Russell followed up his Spa heartbreak with magnanimity regarding the disqualification. Leader-like, you might say.

"I'd been pushing the team for a long time to keep pushing the boundaries," he said as F1 reconvened from its 2024 summer break at Zandvoort. "If you take margin in everything you do, you'd never be disqualified. You'd never make a mistake while driving. You'd never spin off. But you'd never know what the true potential is.

"I've kept my helmet and it's going to be going on my bedside table with my other two victories. Those celebrations I had with the team in that moment straight after were some of the best feelings of my career. So, I'll only take positives from what happened.

"I knew before the race I was a little bit light, but it was too late to make a substantial change without eating a steak or something! Which

was probably not the best pre-race routine.

But there are things that now with the benefit of hindsight, we can do better and we will be doing better moving forward. And, as always, you need to make a mistake first until you recognise there's a problem."

A wise approach from Russell – highlighting his own contribution to what was a collective failing. After all, as well as the worn-tyre weight, Mercedes lost additional mass from Russell's underfloor plank rubbing more than it was expecting on the Eau Rouge compression; this and his lower weight combined to bring the package under the limit.

CRITICAL MASS

But Russell certainly isn't afraid to criticise Mercedes when he feels it's necessary. That was an approach that had stood out in his junior career too and is perhaps best summed up in the debrief tongue-lashing he gave Williams at Silverstone in 2020, immortalised in Netflix's

Drive to Survive. A more recent example came at the Hungarian GP in July, where Russell was knocked out in Q1.

"Sorry about this session guys – it's on me," he said on returning to Mercedes' garage. But when he faced the media a few minutes later, he was lambasting his squad for its fuel strategy meaning he wasn't running at the session's end when the track was quickest. ▶

"And of course it's very frustrating that the one time in three years we've been just under the weight limit was the race we won. That race, I lost 25 points. But in my mind, that is still a win"



Russell celebrates his 'victory' in Belgium. He classes the drive as one of his best in F1 despite his subsequent disqualification





“You can never take your eye off the ball,” Russell fumed. “We need to have a proper sit-down as a team to understand what’s going on.”

But, although it will be forever missing from F1’s history books, Russell’s Spa drive was nevertheless revealing as he prepares for the leadership mantle to move at Mercedes in 2025.

From realising how fresh his tyres still remained even after half of the 34 tours they’d eventually do, and with the confidence he had in convincing Mercedes the one-stop was on (something the canny Fernando Alonso also realised in the chasing pack, resulting in a big gain for Aston Martin) Russell forced it to work. It all showed his self-assurance perfectly.

This combines with his impressive start to 2024, where Russell led Hamilton 10-2 in qualifying up to the British GP, building a 26-point standings lead before he retired with a water leak from their home race, which Hamilton went on to win.

Russell was benefitting from a mindset “sweetspot” he was reaching before each time he climbed into his W15, which meant he was in the position to capitalise in Austria. But in this third successive time Mercedes has faced disappointment in a season’s early rounds, Hamilton noticeably struggled. That he has raised his game considerably since Mercedes fettled the W15 into victory contention demonstrates an age-old F1 problem of proven champions struggling to hit previous heights when they know the big prizes are out of reach... only to rediscover their old form as soon as they get a sniff of the biggest silverware.

Mercedes also offers its own theories on Hamilton’s struggles. That he’s “struggled with this whole generation of car, really, not suiting



Russell with 2025 team-mate Antonelli. George will be Merc’s team leader but will have to beat the youngster to confirm that



Silverstone was the second of Russell’s two poles this season but after leading initially he eventually retired with power issues

his style”, per team trackside engineering director, Andrew Shovlin. The deficit comes mainly in qualifying, where braking stability and

the confidence he derives from this has always been one of Hamilton’s greatest strengths. This has often been absent for Mercedes with the new ground-effect cars.

Since Silverstone, Russell’s form has plateaued – and heading into the Italian GP Hamilton led by 34 in the drivers’ standings, as the points

cost of his home DNF and Spa DQ bit Russell. But he’d had still been Mercedes’ lead driver at Zandvoort – a race that highlighted how any slip on car setup or tyre preparation means even the much-improved W15 can end up an also-ran.

TEMPER TEMPERING

Russell’s temperament in converting half-chances into the best results has also been questioned this term. His Spa strategy change was bold, but he had everything in his own hands to make it work. His offs and a clash with Oscar Piastri in the wet-dry Canada race he had led well from pole highlighted again those in-battle errors which have peppered his F1 career. Think crashing with Valtteri Bottas at Imola in 2021 or hitting the wall on the last lap in Singapore last year.

Immediately after Canada, some members of



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UNCOMFORTABLY DUMB

Why a key issue holding back the W15 proved surprisingly easy to solve

"How could we have been so dumb?"

Maybe it was the thought of missing out on constructors' championship bonus payments that prompted a delightful moment in a recent episode of F1's official podcast. Mercedes technical director James Allison revealed the 'glass half full' nature of a crack Formula 1 team finally reaching a crucial understanding of how to make its car significantly better.

For there can be no doubt: Mercedes has finally made a big breakthrough in F1's new ground-effect era. Sure, its pre-summer-break wins came with unwitting assistance from other teams, but Mercedes was in position to capitalise thanks to its work on improving a W15 car which has always been fast in certain conditions, but not (at the start of the season) across all types of corners. Early on it had been frustratingly difficult to achieve a setup which would give good performance in slow *and* fast corners rather than one or the other.

The performance uptick came post-Monaco, where Mercedes had introduced a front wing upgrade. This was credited with improving car handling overall by keeping the aerodynamic balance reliable for the drivers. Later, a bulge in the W15's nose suggested a front-suspension damper development; the team coyly insists it's actually related to cooling. Allison dismissed talk of a "eureka" moment in development, insisting that the path had always been there – it had just taken too long to recognise.

"It just means that the driver can trust both the front and rear axle in a fast corner and a slow corner," Allison adds. "And can trust it from when he hits the brakes at the beginning of the corner, all the way through the apex and out the other side."



the F1 commentariat were loudly questioning: does Russell make too many mistakes in key moments when the pressure is on?

GP Racing was able to ask this to Russell directly at the very next race in Spain. His eyes narrowed ever so slightly and what followed was the very definition of setting the record straight.

"I could drive one tenth off the pace for 70 laps in a row and I wouldn't make a single mistake," he replied. "[Before] I wasn't pushing myself the way I'm pushing myself now.

"So yeah, mistakes happen. It's life. We've all been through times where these mistakes happen, but they happen as I'm pushing myself above and beyond, and I think I'm in that position as I'm driving better than ever."

Russell's straight-talking attitude is long established. It hardly seems like any time has passed since he was the 'old-head-on-young-shoulders' rising star of the Mercedes junior programme. While the Silver Arrows' team leader mantle is about to move, Antonelli has shifted into Russell's previous up-and-comer placing.

Russell has deployed another wise strategy on this – talking up his expected new team-mate. An extra consideration around this is Wolff's close bond with Antonelli and his family.


"Kimi's an exceptional driver, such an amazing track record," Russell says of Antonelli – more careful not to confirm the expected promotion

In Austria Russell was in prime position to claim the win when Max Verstappen and Lando Norris tangled on lap 64

plan at Zandvoort than Wolff was in a group interview with Dutch media at that race, where he essentially confirmed Antonelli's place in Mercedes' 2025 line-up.

"I see him every time he's racing F2. We always keep a close eye on how he's getting on, watching all of the races. We did a test together in Silverstone a couple of months ago, so that was a great opportunity for him to get behind the wheel of an F1 car. He was exceptionally fast, so I'm sure if he were to get a drive in F1, he'd do a great job."

For Russell, going up against Antonelli is a straightforward if complex task: beat the newcomer and cement Mercedes team leader status. Harder will be treading that path against the backdrop of Wolff's closeness with Antonelli and continued public courting of Verstappen.

Three into two won't work if Verstappen still wants out of Red Bull before his contract ends in 2028, and the word in the paddock is that Mercedes' engine project for the new formula coming in 2026 is in great shape. For Russell, then, more Spas must be the aim – but this time he must retain the trophies and ideally fight for the world title in 2025 too. 

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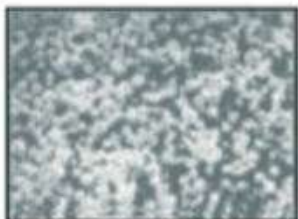
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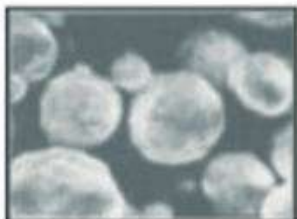
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JACK DOOHAN

The son of five-time MotoGP champion Mick Doohan explains why he took a gamble on having a year out of racing to be Alpine's reserve driver, and how it ultimately paid off – even if it meant having to fight his friend Mick Schumacher for the 2025 race seat...

What was it like waiting for an opportunity, knowing that maybe there would be no room for you? Did it cross your mind that you might never get a chance in F1?

Now I think there's more realisation of what potentially couldn't have been, but I never let my mind get to that point where I [accepted I] won't have this opportunity. I can't be in the headspace that 'this can't happen.' You know, I was living and breathing it and believing it from the moment I woke up to the moment I went to sleep. And I think almost every interview I've done this year started with a question about whether it was risky taking a year out, the potential downside that has to it. But Alpine and I trusted the process, and I'm very grateful to now be sitting in this position.

How useful has testing a 2022 car been in your preparations for next season?

The TPC stuff [FIA rules have a 'testing in previous cars' provision permitting private tests in two-year-old cars] does an exceptional job in preparing me, albeit it's not a '24 car. I've completed my mandatory FP1 sessions, so there's no plans to do more but I'd welcome it if that would come about. At the moment my focus is to fulfil my role as a reserve driver, making sure I maximise my time in the sim, because every development that I'm doing, bettering the car we're currently racing, is bettering a potential '25 car that I'll be driving next year. So it's all super-relevant, and what I'm doing is worthwhile.

The team evaluated you and Mick Schumacher in a track-test shootout. He's good friend of yours, so how was the feeling afterwards, and how strange was it to compete against him?

It was strange. For me, I kept the business... I didn't think of it in any other way than at the end

of the day, I'm just going to hop into the car and drive as fast as I can. It doesn't matter who's next to me. Doesn't mean I'm gonna be any different outside the car. But when I hop in, I have the mindset to be as fast as I can. And the outcome was that I positioned myself to make sure that I was first in line to get this seat, regardless of who it was next to me.

When did you realise you have a proper shot at a race seat for 2025?

Sort of after the first quarter of the year – I knew there was a contention. There was, let's say, a rabbit to chase, and a possibility that I can fight for this. There was no given task. There was obviously a lot of people that were still out of contract and so much going on. So I had to be very patient and find my time and really plead my case, make sure I maximised every time I got behind the wheel. And I'm grateful the patience paid off. As well as not racing, because, like you said, that is a risk, but potentially, if I didn't take that risk, this wouldn't have happened.

What about your personal management? How helpful was your father's experience for you when you were coming so close to a contract?

I think just guiding me on a mental perspective, how I'm conducting myself. It was some difficult

times knowing that at points my future was outside of my control. And there were points of waiting, making sure I was positioning myself in the right way. And he had a very rich experience of that himself. So I was really just trying to soak in all the information that I could get. But he also knew it was a very important time for me to learn things on my own as well. So he was really doing a perfect mix of making me find my feet myself, but also pitching in what he had to.

The team is going through a lot of changes. How much have you spoken with Ollie Oakes and Flavio Briatore about their plans for the team?

I think the biggest thing is getting Alpine back to where we know it can be, and we're getting all the right people in place to do that, and taking the risks and opportunities where we need to. For sure, taking a rookie can be a risk, but I feel like it's also going to do really great things for the team at the factory to have a new face in there. You know, a young kid, I'm hungry, I'm determined, and I feel that's going to help a lot with mechanics and everyone back at factory to get everyone back together, get the motivation high, and everyone pushing that step further.

What do you think is going to be the main challenge for you in your rookie season?

I guess the unknowns. Since day one the team has been preparing me as much as possible to be ready for this day, for when it does come – with all the testing, plus all the marketing commitments and so on. So the only unknown thing left, really, is racing on track with the 19 other guys. I have to learn how they're racing. I can watch it, but how they will race me, how the situation will be... there's a few things I'm just gonna have to figure out myself.

**SO THE ONLY UNKNOWN
THING LEFT, REALLY, IS
RACING ON TRACK WITH THE
19 OTHER GUYS**



V R O O M AT THE TOP



Alpine is seemingly stuck in a constant state of beta, dogged by serial leadership changes and rumours that its parent company wants to sell. But new team principal **Oliver Oakes** and 'executive advisor' **Flavio Briatore** insist Alpine can be turned around without further firings – and that it's not for sale...

WORDS STUART COOLING PICTURES  SHUTTERSTOCK



AMONG THE CURIOUS CUSTOMS

of the British and Canadian parliaments is the tradition in which newly elected speakers of the house are ceremonially ‘dragged’ to their chair. Supposedly this faux-unwillingness reflects the frequency with which previous holders of that office were parted with their heads after delivering news the monarch found disagreeable, unpalatable or downright vexatious.

Sadly this isn’t true, although Henry VIII beheaded no fewer than three former speakers after they’d left office.

History doesn’t record whether Oliver Oakes was dragged to the much-inhabited chair behind the Alpine team principal’s desk on his first day at Enstone. Probably not, since the consequences of falling out of favour here are rather less fatal.

As Mark Gallagher points out on p29 of this issue, over the past 16 years the team currently known as Alpine has cycled through multiple owners and leaders, only to return to the same place on the grid – rather like the dream that inspired Freud’s concept of the nightmare. Team

principals have come and gone, their tenures ended by failure, falling victim to regime change, or their own recognition the team was a basket case. Arguably we should express this as a Venn diagram rather than a list since at least one former TP straddles more than one category.

This is an organisation which won back-to-back drivers’ championships in 1994-’95 and 2005-’06 but it is very different now, the legacy of a disastrous period of ownership by Luxembourg-based venture capitalists who snapped it up as a distressed asset when Renault was desperate to sell in 2009. During that period the global financial crisis also moved Toyota, Honda and BMW to flee F1, while Renault’s sprint for the exit was hastened by the reputational damage incurred by the Singapore ‘Crashgate’ scandal.

While the team, rebranded as Lotus in a peculiar marketing tie-up, remained competitive for several seasons – even finishing second-best to Red Bull in 2013 – it slumped in 2014 when its innovative solution to the new aerodynamic rules fell short and Renault’s new hybrid power unit could barely muster a handful of laps without blowing up. By then money was already a problem, partially because Genii Capital founder Gérard López had brokered Kimi Räikkönen’s F1 comeback via a deal yielding a low-ish base salary but a generous €50,000 per point. In two seasons Kimi won two grands prix, racked up 390 points, then walked out before the end of 2013 when Lotus didn’t pay up.

Running an F1 team is an expensive business, especially once the prize money dries up, and soon Räikkönen wasn’t the only entity going unpaid. The team even featured on the low-rent Channel 5 docu-series *Can’t Pay? We’ll Take It Away* as cameras recorded bailiffs doorstepping the Enstone factory and leaving with a show car as collateral. Bailiffs also swooped on Lotus’s garage at Spa in 2015; one team member had to fight to keep hold of his bicycle, insisting it was his personal property. Renault’s re-acquisition was rushed through in December that year, with a few helpful nudges from Bernie Ecclestone, as the team teetered on the financial brink – narrowly avoiding being put into administration after the irresistible force that is HMRC joined the long line of creditors.

Unpaid staff were deserting in droves so Renault inherited a much-denuded organisation. When *GP Racing* visited to report on the start of a new infrastructure investment programme ▶



at Enstone we were astounded to find the room which had once housed the aerodynamics team and some cutting-edge computational fluid dynamics hardware empty but for rows of unoccupied desks and scattered cardboard boxes.

But despite considerable investment and



Oakes is not new to a GP paddock. Apart from Hitech's involvement in lower formulae, it runs the fictional APX cars for filming purposes

Uralkali magnate Nikita Mazepin, who briefly owned a majority share in Hitech, has led some to conclude that Oakes's recruitment to Alpine is a precursor to a sale.

But Briatore, speaking to the press during the Dutch GP weekend for the first time since his return, unequivocally quashed this.

"Something is very clear," he said. "Nothing is for sale. Luca de Meo doesn't want to sell the team. Question *finito*."

Unquestionably some serious structural issues remain. Briatore claimed Enstone "didn't need so many people" but then denied job cuts were in the offing.

One problem which none of the many team principals has successfully addressed is the toxic not-invented-here outlook which divides Enstone, where the cars are built, and Renault Sport's Viry Châtillon facility, which develops



yet more changes at the top, 'Team Enstone' has failed to rise higher than fourth in the constructors' championship. It now answers to different masters; Carlos Ghosn, who greenlit Renault's re-purchase, was accused of fraud in 2018 and smuggled himself out of Japan in a box of musical equipment. Current CEO Luca de Meo, who has bold plans for expanding the Alpine brand, is now rolling the dice for a fourth time on new team leadership in his tenure.

While Cyril Abiteboul's reign was characterised by internal politics and a failure to deliver on objectives (despite frequently changing the goalposts), at least he had experience of motor racing. Laurent Rossi appeared to believe that possession of an MBA meant no racing experience or, indeed, outside advice was required. Having been abruptly terminated as a consultant, four-time world champion Alain Prost fulminated that Rossi was a prime example of the Dunning-Kruger effect, the tendency of those with low skills or IQs to vastly overestimate their competence in a given field. It's commonly agreed that Otmar Szafnauer wasn't given sufficient time to execute change but someone's head needed to roll. Bruno Famin, meanwhile, bore the demeanour of one who didn't want the job in the first place.

Chassis (Enstone) and engine (Viry) departments both think that the other is mainly to blame for Alpine's continually underperforming cars

De Meo brought Flavio Briatore back into the fold earlier this year with a mandate to oversee this latest reset. But Briatore knows his days of manning the pitwall and factory floor are in the rear view mirror, so he has recruited Oliver Oakes – who brings not only racing experience but also, crucially, ambition. Indeed there are many parallels between Oakes and Red Bull team principal Christian Horner: both were moderately successful racing drivers up to a point where they recognised their own limitations behind the wheel, and switched tracks to team management. Oakes's Hitech organisation has run the likes of George Russell in European F3 and Liam Lawson in F2, as well as a brief sojourn in Asian F3 with Jack Doohan. On top of its current F1 weekend presence in the feeder formulae, it runs Brad Pitt's fictional APX GP team for filming purposes.

Oakes also lodged an F1 entry when the FIA opened a tender process for a new team last year but, despite financial backing from Kazakhstani mining billionaire Vladimir Kim, it wasn't put forward. This, together with historic links to




Oakes has been brought in by Briatore, who returned – at an executive level – to the team he led the last time it won a championship

the engines. Each side blames the other for underperformance. On the Friday of the Dutch GP a committee representing employees at Viry – which faces "site transformation" if Alpine abandons in-house engines for Mercedes PUs – sent an email to F1 media describing the threat as "incomprehensible".

It went on to talk up the promise of the 2026 engine project, claim the 80% of the current car-performance deficit was the fault of the chassis, and that the UK facility "struggles to solidify its structure amid successive changes in direction".

In this they are pushing against an open door with Oakes, who says "Enstone has been mismanaged for quite a few years. We have to get back to focusing on racing".

Trouble is, at least one of his predecessors understood that but failed to make it happen. 

BRIATORE KNOWS HIS DAYS OF MANNING THE PITWALL AND FACTORY FLOOR ARE IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, SO HE HAS RECRUITED OLIVER OAKES – WHO BRINGS NOT ONLY RACING EXPERIENCE BUT ALSO, CRUCIALLY, AMBITION



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MR CLEAN

As a mechanic he wore white gloves. As a team manager he drilled the sharpest pitcrew in the business and bent race directors to his will. As **Jonathan Wheatley** moves to become team principal at Audi-owned Sauber, there are those who think he's a bigger loss to Red Bull than **Adrian Newey**...

Ask anyone in the Formula 1 paddock and you'll get the same response – Jonathan Wheatley is a detail man. His obsessive pursuit of perfection puts him in the same niche as another team boss who entered motorsport via the workshop floor: Ron Dennis.


"I've known him since my karting days," David Coulthard tells *GP Racing*. Latterly DC worked with Wheatley in the mid-2000s as they helped Christian Horner build Red Bull Racing from midfielder to championship contender.

"Back in the 80s, Jonathan was a mechanic for a guy called David Cuff – and he always used to wear white gloves when he was mechanicing... which was obviously unheard of at that time! Because karting was dirty and oily and everything, but he just figured out that having clean hands was a good thing.

"I've known Jonathan since we were teenagers, and he always stood out from an early age – because he just did things a little bit differently. Very meticulous."

F1 is long past the era when teams were run by the person whose name was above the factory door. Bosses are now employees themselves, servants of higher powers – but while many of these in recent years have come from a commercial background or been company men, increasingly they're from an engineering background, either promoted internally or recruited from outside.

Wheatley's background is, however, very different. Having started out as a mechanic at Benetton in the early 1990s, he rose through the ranks, eventually reaching the position of Red Bull's sporting director and team manager. ▶

WORDS OLEG KARPOV PICTURES  motorsport
IMAGES
RED BULL CONTENT POOL





His Audi appointment makes a lot of sense. During the Italian Grand Prix weekend Audi's CEO Gernot Döllner, facing the media for the first time since sacking Andreas Seidl and Oliver Hoffmann, outlined how the new leader duo will operate: while Mattia Binotto, who has already started working at Hinwil and was present with Döllner in Monza, will largely oversee the work at the factory, Wheatley is supposed to run things on track. And there's arguably hardly anyone better for the job, since Wheatley's varied experience of all sorts of F1 roles, beginning as Benetton's rear jackman, gives him a broad yet detailed understanding of every aspect of a team's trackside operations.

I'D RATHER JACK

In a video interview with DC, organised by Red Bull a few years ago, Wheatley recalled one of his first jobs in Formula 1: "I was selected for my first pitstop by the chief mechanic going [Wheatley reaches out and feels Coulthard's bicep] 'rear jack'. That was based on strength alone. It was Magny-Cours – my first pitstop in 1991. And I practised, and the car obviously had no fuel in it. [But then] it came in, I think, quite early on in the race, maybe lap two, full of fuel, and I was just dangling off the jack – I couldn't even lift the car in the air, so somebody else had to come over and do it."

Over the next few years, Wheatley would not only learn how to actually hoist the car off the ground, but would also get promotion after promotion in the team.

"I joined Benetton in 1996," says his former colleague and one-time Toro Rosso and AlphaTauri sporting director Graham Watson. "I was on the test team. Jonathan's on the race team. And back in those days, [it was] just after the period of Michael Schumacher, so they – Jon Wheatley, Paul Howard and all these others, really – were like mega guys.

Wheatley has been at the heart of Red Bull Racing pretty much since the start. Here he is with Coulthard and Horner in 2007



It was Wheatley's earlier experience and meticulous attention to detail that transformed Red Bull into the pitstop kings

And I was privileged enough to actually see Jonathan's career progress.

"And here's a true story about Jon's attention to detail – from one of the first days I worked with him as my boss, when he was the chief

mechanic of the test team. I flew back to the UK on Sunday night after the Monaco Grand Prix because the number-one mechanic of the test team had had an accident, so I needed to replace him. And Jon wanted us at the circuit at 7am on Monday morning.

"So I landed at I don't know what time, slept a couple of hours, arrived at the circuit, walked into the garage... And Jon looks at me and says, 'Oi – the top button on your collar's not done up.' And that's the attention to detail of Jonathan.

"He looks at every little thing. And that's probably why he's been so successful because with him nothing falls through the cracks. You know, people are talking about Adrian Newey... Trust me, Jon Wheatley is a big part of that company [Red Bull Racing]."



After joining Red Bull in 2006, Wheatley used his Enstone-accumulated experience to assemble what is considered the strongest pitcrew in post-refuelling F1. It's thanks to him Red Bull is now famous for its lightning tyre-change stops – having broken the two-second barrier a few years ago.

EVERYTHING CHANGES

"You know, I look back to some of my notes from back in 2009, early 2010," Wheatley said to DC in the aforementioned video interview, "and really it was complete blue-sky thinking at that time. We went through every single aspect of it, literally every single aspect – and we had a real motivation: young, keen group of people. We

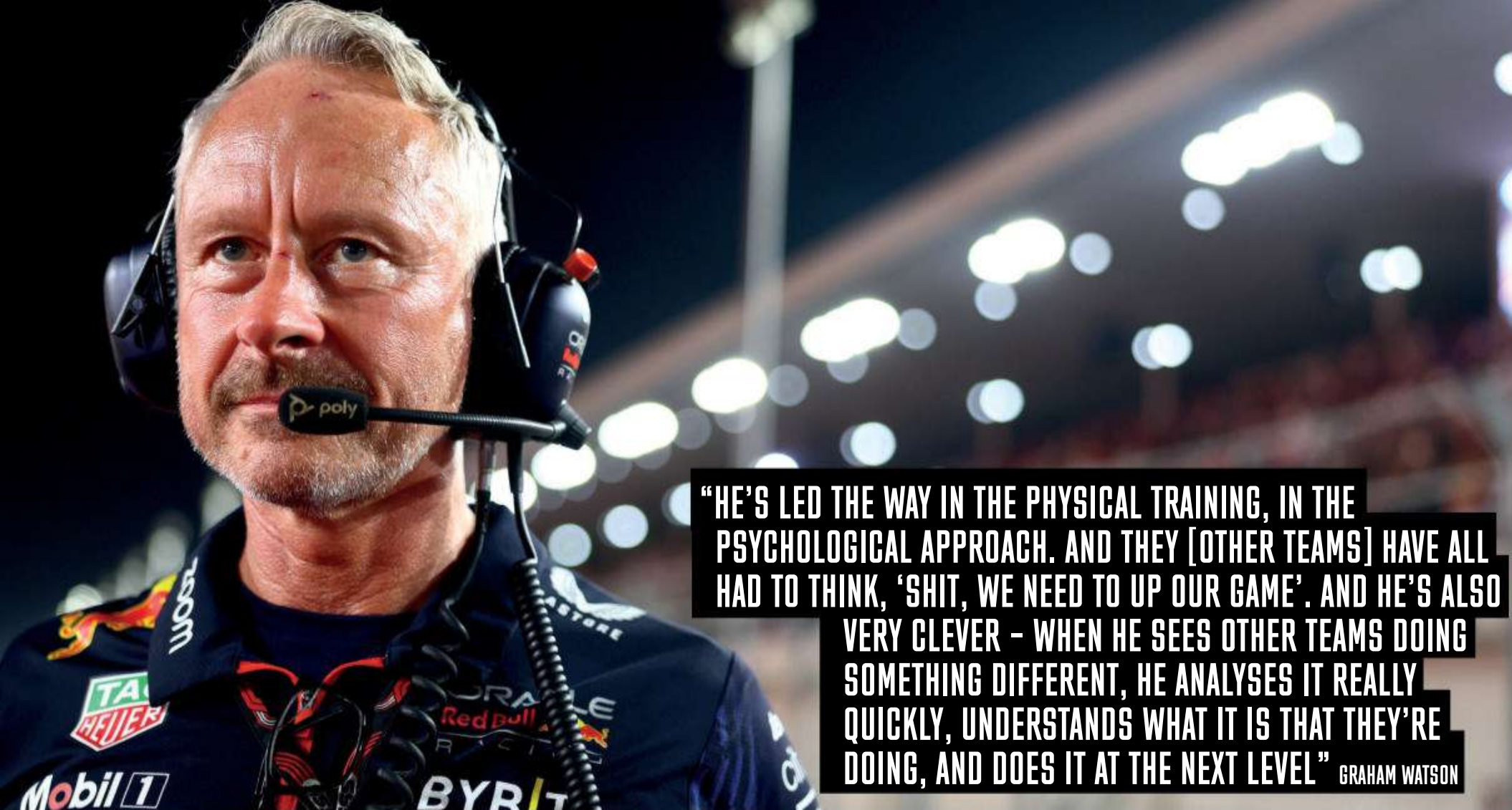
made a massive step, a huge step between the historical pitstops of the refueling era and then creating the new standards for [F1 as a whole] – and I feel very proud about that. I really didn't spend a lot of time looking at other people's pitstops [back then]. Because, to be frank, for a long time, nobody was really close to us."

Until in-race refuelling was banned for the 2010 season, wheel changes could be relatively leisurely because pitstop length was determined by how much fuel was going in at the mandated 12 litres per second. Now the wheel change alone determined how long the car was stationary – and Wheatley was the first to make this quicker through technological and human-performance improvements. In January 2010 the current editor of *GP Racing*, then a freelancer, was

assigned by the *Red Bulletin* – Red Bull's in house magazine – to cover an intensive two-day 'boot camp' organised by Wheatley at the Bisham Abbey elite sports centre. There, as well as team-building exercises, the pitcrew were professionally coached through strength and flexibility routines and reaction drills. The article was spiked pre-publication because the team didn't want to give away any secrets.

Watson, in his capacity as team manager and sporting director of Red Bull's sister team, knows all too well the scope of Red Bull's pitstop achievements – since the Faenza team largely used the same equipment.

"People think you get all the right kit and you have lightning-quick pitstops," he says. "I know that's completely not true. I've been there. I've ▶



“HE’S LED THE WAY IN THE PHYSICAL TRAINING, IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH. AND THEY [OTHER TEAMS] HAVE ALL HAD TO THINK, ‘SHIT, WE NEED TO UP OUR GAME’. AND HE’S ALSO VERY CLEVER – WHEN HE SEES OTHER TEAMS DOING SOMETHING DIFFERENT, HE ANALYSES IT REALLY QUICKLY, UNDERSTANDS WHAT IT IS THAT THEY’RE DOING, AND DOES IT AT THE NEXT LEVEL” GRAHAM WATSON

been at Toro Rosso, and worked with those guys for those years, trying to get them to be more consistent... What he [Wheatley] has done there [at Red Bull] is exceptional. And it’s not just that they’ve done it on a one-off year. They have consecutively and consistently done that for years now. And that’s all about his leadership, it’s about his motivation, it’s about getting people to focus. He’s a huge part of that.

“Jonathan led the way in pitstops. He’s led the way in the physical training, in the psychological approach. It’s all been coming out of that team. And they [other teams] have all had to think, ‘Shit, we need to up our game’. And he’s also very clever – when he sees other teams doing something different, he analyses it really quickly, understands what it is that they’re doing, and does it at the next level. With that super attention to detail, to a level that would blow most people’s minds.”

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

In Wheatley Audi will also be getting a man with a knowledge of the rulebook bordering on eidetic recall. This may not sound glamorous but its effective deployment in crunch situations can be transformative.

“Again, because of his background, he has such a broad understanding of the business,” says Watson. “You can’t really sit there and argue with him. With sporting regulations, there are guys who have been in the sport a long, long time, and a lot of the regulations are written in a way that you just don’t understand... You read it and you go, ‘How the hell did that become a regulation? And what does it mean?’

“And then you sit down with people like Alan Permane, Jon Wheatley, Steve Nielsen, and

they say, ‘Well, in 1991 so and so did this. And then...’ And you go, ‘Oh my God’.”

However you feel about what transpired, it is inescapable that Wheatley also played an important role in Max Verstappen winning the title in that controversial 2021 battle. It was Wheatley who had been negotiating with Michael Masi and dealing with the stewards throughout that whole campaign, including in Abu Dhabi – when it was maybe Jonathan using the right words at the right time, and in a sufficiently lawyerly manner, which swayed the FIA’s race director into making *that* controversial call...

“When the announcement came for his new

Wheatley has been Horner’s right-hand man at Red Bull and many feel the team will miss him as much as they will miss Adrian Newey

position in ’26 I texted him immediately,” says Watson, “and I said, ‘John, look, I don’t think there’s anybody in the paddock I can think of is more deserving than you getting this job’. He’s given his life to sport. I’ve been here 28 years and he’s been here much longer than me.

“I don’t see any reason he won’t succeed. He’s got all the attributes. And he’s very clever, because he can talk at all levels. If he’s talking with a garage technician or one of the mechanics he’ll talk the way he needs to talk there, and if he’s talking at sort of next level – he can find the right words and the right way to deliver the message. It’s a quality that a lot of people don’t have, and maybe myself sometimes, too.”

Many believe that it is Wheatley, not Newey, whose loss will be felt most keenly by Red Bull. Watson certainly does. ▶



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“100 percent. Jon doesn’t believe me when I tell him this, but I learned the majority of what I took from when I left Benetton – after five-six years I think it was – to my next team from working with him. And we worked closely together a lot in the winter on pit equipment and things. And when we worked together on the test team, we had a very similar ethos – and I learned so much from him. When I went to Toro Rosso, I just took what I learned from my Benetton days – and it’s a successful fingerprint, it’s a DNA that works, and pretty much how all the teams work in the pitlane now. And when I see the way Red Bull works, it is very much Jonathan, You can see the Jonathan imprint all around the whole place.”

A lot will change for Wheatley himself, too. It’s not just a new role, but a role at a team in transition, in a crisis that’s almost deeper than that of the Jaguar team whose ashes became Red Bull Racing.



Wheatley got to taste success again after his Benetton and Renault days with Sebastian Vettel’s four championships from 2010-13



“It’s different now for Jonathan as an older man going into Audi/Sauber,” says Coulthard, “but he’s got that knowledge and experience now. He’s obviously operationally well-known within the paddock, so I have no doubt he’ll make that role his own, and inevitably there’ll need to be changes because the team can’t just hide behind not having a budget and everything.


Team principal at Audi will be a completely different challenge for Wheatley, especially given Sauber’s current performance levels

“In F1 everything matters. That’s the reality. Some people think only certain things matter. But everything matters, and you’ve got to prioritise how you fix things. And Jonathan

will methodically make sure he puts the right people in place.

“It’s going to be a big challenge to do that in Switzerland [where Sauber is based], with all the challenges that come with being outside of the UK. But I have no doubt he’ll leave his fingerprint on that and be successful.

“I’ve got to declare that we’re friends. But it doesn’t surprise me that he’s been on this journey. Because his style and his attention to detail have always been something that set him apart from others.”

Going by Sauber’s form right now, the move to Hinwil is Wheatley’s greatest challenge yet. 

“AND WHEN I SEE THE WAY RED BULL WORKS, IT IS VERY MUCH JONATHAN, YOU CAN SEE THE JONATHAN IMPRINT ALL AROUND THE WHOLE PLACE” GRAHAM WATSON



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One of the team's less-heralded grand prix winners
– once it was armed with the right engine...

BRABHAM BT26A

Want an example of how influential the Cosworth DFV was in Formula 1 during its first flush in the late 1960s? Look no further than the Brabham BT26, a model that was transformed across its two-year period lifespan from disastrous defender of double world championships to a potent grand prix winner only bested

by Jackie Stewart's Tyrrell-run, DFV-powered Matra by the end of 1969. All because of the Ford-badged Double Four Valve V8, surely unrivalled as F1's greatest engine, which ever-pragmatic Jack Brabham accepted was the obvious answer to his team's unravelling form at the end of the model's frustrating first year of active service.

He'd pulled a fabulous fast one when the 'return to power' 3-litre era began in 1966 as F1 engines doubled in capacity, astutely commissioning Repco – short for Replacement Parts Company – to adapt an Oldsmobile block he'd sourced in LA into a simple, powerful and crucially reliable V8. As Lotus effectively killed time before unleashing the DFV in the spring of 1967, on what was initially an exclusive basis with Ford and Cosworth, the Brabham-Repco made hay, the old man – at 40 – breaking a six-year points-scoring grand prix win drought to become a three-time world champion. Even the following year, with the DFV coming on song for Jim Clark and Graham Hill, tried and trusted still won the day: Brabham's supposed 'number two' Denny Hulme undercut the boss to chisel out a title campaign based on consistency to make it two from two.

Forever after, Brabham remained convinced his team would have pulled off a title hat-trick in 1968, had Repco kept it simple. Instead, the Australian company strove for more power, trading its twin-cam type 740 V8 for the more complex four-cam, 32-valve type 860. Such was Repco's ambition, it initially explored two approaches: one using a short-stroke magnesium block, the other for a new cylinder

BRABHAM BT26A

NOW
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head design using a radial valve disposition. Brabham and Ron Tauranac were concerned – for good reason. In the end, the new engine featured an aluminium block with twin overhead camshafts and four-valve cylinder heads, but avoided the radial valve layout or short-stroke options. Still, the prolonged birth meant the V8 was late for the start of the season, when Brabham lined up its 1967-spec BT24s for the South African Grand Prix at Kyalami.

Hulme wasn't driving one of them. He'd chosen to defend his hard-won crown elsewhere, with Kiwi buddy Bruce McLaren, who'd landed a DFV supply – no longer exclusive to Lotus – for his handsome Robin Herd-designed M7A. There were no hard feelings as far as Brabham was concerned, especially as he'd signed a young charger he rated highly as a promising replacement.

Jack already liked the cut of Jochen Rindt's jib, in Cooper-Maserati F1 cars and certainly in Roy Winkelmann-run Brabham Formula 2s in which the Austrian had become dominant in the second-tier category. The admiration was mutual, too. "I knew he was one hell of a driver, and we'd had some tremendous F2 dices together," wrote Brabham in his autobiography, *The Jack Brabham Story*. "I was happy to race against him with one of his wheels almost in the cockpit with me, and vice versa it seemed. He was absolutely fearless, tremendously talented, and a really good bloke."

At Kyalami, Rindt got his Brabham stint off to a decent start by finishing third behind Clark and Hill in the Lotus 49s. But it proved a false dawn. The BT26 took its bow at Jarama in May – by which time F1, Lotus and the whole racing world was reeling from the death of Clark, killed in a senseless F2 crash at Hockenheim on April 7.

The BT26 was the last spaceframe Brabham from Ron Tauranac – the T of the BT model designation – although the migration towards full monocoques was clearly in mind.





THE NEW BRABHAM WAS ONLY JUST READY IN TIME FOR THE SPANISH GP, ARRIVING ON A SPECIALLY CHARTERED PLANE AHEAD OF THE FINAL PRACTICE SESSION

Tauranac came up with a multi-tubular chassis with stressed panels which allowed for lighter-gauge frame tubes, with a widened track relative to the BT24 in an effort to improve turn-in performance. Even compared with a stressed-skin monocoque, the spaceframe was a lightweight, easy to repair and responsive option – all very Brabham. Although Tauranac later admitted: “It worked quite well, but it might have been cheaper to build a monocoque in the long run.”

The new Brabham was only just ready in time for the Spanish GP, arriving on a specially chartered plane ahead of the final practice session. The reward for that work was for the type 860 engine to explode on the main straight – a portent of things to come.

John Judd, later to make his own name as a respected and dependable F1 engine tuner, recalled working on the Repco V8, having spent much of 1967 in Australia. “The power output was OK, but when it came to racing it we had a large number of quality control problems,” he told Alan Henry for his book *Brabham: The Grand Prix Cars*. “We went down to Jarama for that second race of 1968 and Jack had that failure, caused by a valve seat falling out, so we had to scratch. Eventually we sussed out that Repco was making the valve seats out of the wrong material, and they were shrinking.”

The season turned into a huge missed opportunity because of the reliability headaches. The only time the Repco finished

a grand prix was at the Nürburgring, where Rindt and Brabham finished third and fifth, way behind the inspired Stewart. But they also knew the car was fast. Rindt qualified on pole at the French and Canadian GPs.

One of the best ripping yarns from that year comes from the weekend of the Belgian GP, and a tale which highlights several aspects of that time: the wonderfully ingenious Heath Robinson approach of F1 people; the lengths they would stretch to fix a problem; and perhaps why, for all the frustrations, Rindt loved driving for Brabham in 1968.

The story is barely believable – but who could make this up? Following more difficulties in Saturday practice, the team stripped an 860 engine, pinpointed the valve seat problem and then Brabham flew home to the team’s Guildford base. Meanwhile Judd and Repco’s Norm Wilson collected a new engine from Heathrow. It was torn down overnight, machinist Ron Cousins drilled out the old valve seats, made new ones and installed them with help from Brabham mainstay Roy Billington – after the new heads had been cooked in Mrs Brabham’s oven back at Jack’s Surrey family home! The smoke from the kitchen at 3am didn’t exactly go down well. “I was pretty glad to be going as deaf as I already was,” quipped Jack. Once the engine was reassembled, it was flown back to Spa on the right-hand seat of the boss’s Piper Twin Comanche.

By season’s end, Brabham had long accepted Repco’s time as an F1 force was up and that he needed a DFV. And with a heavy heart, Rindt accepted Colin Chapman’s advances to fatefully join Lotus, to replace the irreplaceable. Such a headstrong man could never be the pliant muse in the manner Clark had been for so many years.

At Brabham, the team set about adapting what was now the BT26A to take the shorter DFV, and the benefits easily outweighed any problems. Meanwhile, Jack hired another rising talent to replace Rindt. Jacky Ickx was recovering ▶



from a broken leg sustained at the 1968 Canadian GP when he switched from Ferrari. His relationship with Ford through his parallel JW Automotive GT40 sports car campaign and Gulf Oils greased the wheels, with Brabham sponsorship from the American fuel giant ameliorating some of the losses of giving up a free engine supply from Repco.

Already a GP winner following his breakthrough at Rouen, and fourth in the final standings in 1968, Ickx was an established star. But in direct contrast to Rindt, his single season at Brabham would prove far less harmonious – even if he was far more effective in a car and team that eventually found its groove with the DFV.

“Ickx was a fine driver, but on a personal level he and I never completely clicked in the way I had with Dan [Gurney], Denny and Jochen before him,” recalled Brabham in his autobiography. “Perhaps it was simply a generational thing. I was 43, rising 44, and he was 20 years younger.”

Was Ickx shy or aloof? Perhaps a bit of both. Whatever, it seemed he preferred racing for a team that would make him its sole focus. That didn’t seem likely at Brabham, given the boss was in the other car. Although as events would turn out, that was precisely the experience Ickx would find thrown at him mid-season in 1969 – to the old man’s considerable pain and discomfort. It brought out the best in the Belgian.

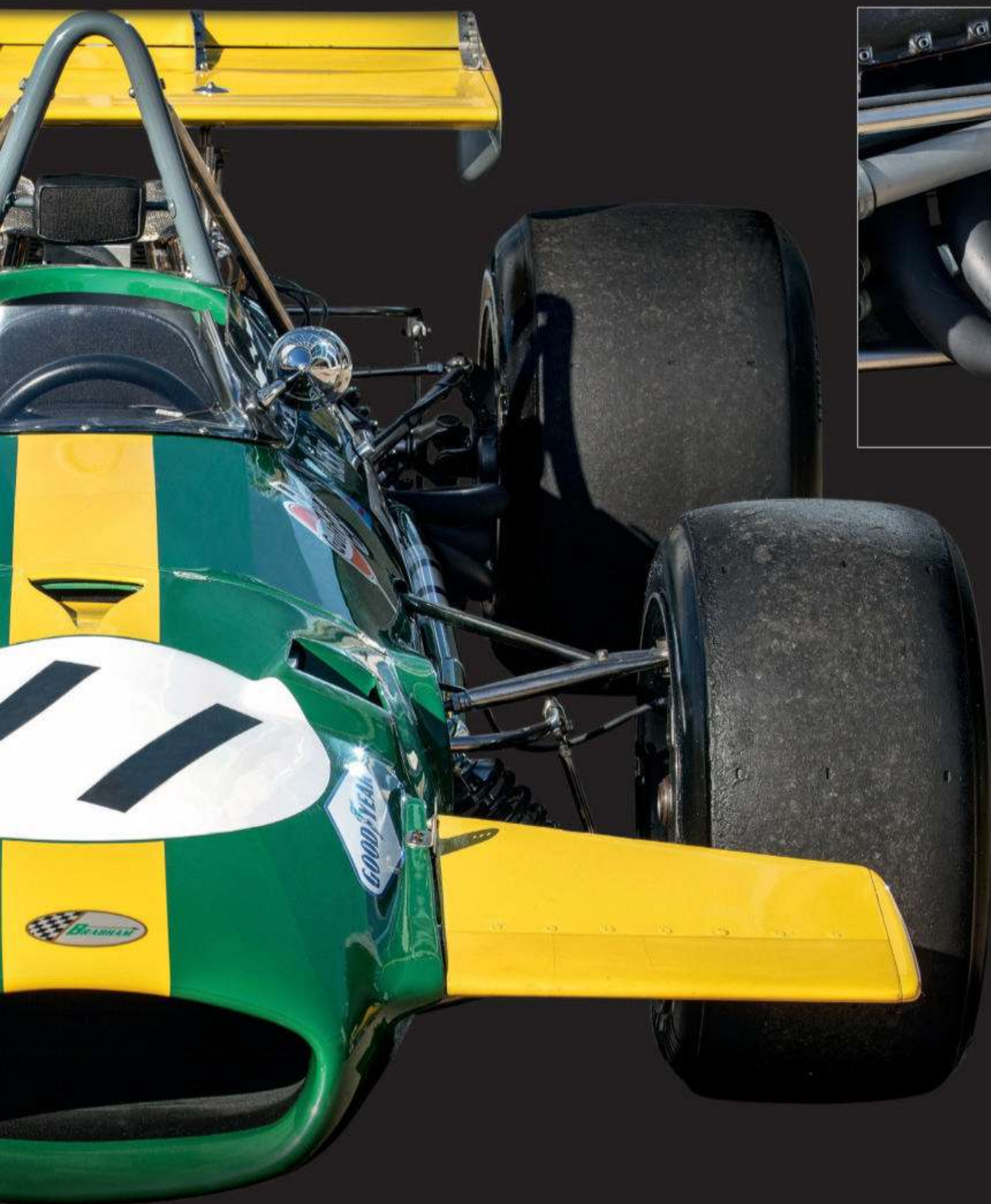
The new-powered BT26A took its bow at Kyalami at the first round of 1969, in full bi-plane mode, a wing not only sprouting from the back but also over the nose. Brabham had joined Ferrari (and undercut Lotus) by experimenting with the first aerofoils fitted to F1 cars at that eventful Belgian GP the previous year, and now preposterously high wings on spindly stalks had become the thing to have. Brabham immediately justified the DFV switch with pole position in South Africa, outqualifying Rindt in the Lotus 49 – perhaps he allowed himself a small smile at that. But it was Stewart who would lead the race from start to finish, while Brabham’s day collapsed along with his rear aerofoil. He just held on to the huge moment that caused, then pitted for it and the front wing to be removed. Without them, the engine was then over-revving wildly, so he prudently retired to save the expensive new motor from blowing on its team debut.



BRABHAM BT26A

But further indications of a Brabham revival came in the second of the two British non-championship F1 races that spring. At Silverstone’s International Trophy, Brabham made the most of Goodyear’s rain tyre to build a big lead – which was needed when he started to run low on fuel in the closing stages. Rindt closed in, but Jack made it home to win what turned out to be his last F1 victory not only at Silverstone, but on British soil.

But those pesky wings... they were causing major bother. At Montjuïc for the Spanish GP, both Rindt and Hill in the Lotus 49s were lucky to escape big shunts caused by further collapses, while Ickx too experienced disconcerting trouble. His Brabham’s rear suspension failed as a consequence of



BY THE DUTCH GP, BRABHAM – LIKE LOTUS AND THE REST – WAS EXPERIMENTING WITH INTEGRATED WING SOLUTIONS IN THIS NEW QUEST FOR AERODYNAMIC DOWNFORCE

the twin wings breaking up. Something had to give – and it did, mid-weekend in Monaco when the spindly aerofoils were banned. There and newly wingless for the race, Ickx suffered another rear suspension failure, while Brabham collided with John Surtees' slowing BRM. Still, a third BT26A – run in smart dark blue for Piers Courage by that enthusiastic dreamer Frank Williams – inherited a happy second place to Hill's Lotus 49.

By the Dutch GP, Brabham – like Lotus and the rest – was experimenting with integrated wing solutions in this new quest for aerodynamic downforce. The BT26A sprouted an upswept aluminium frame supporting a rear aerofoil above the engine cover, Ickx and Brabham finishing fifth and sixth at Zandvoort. But then Brabham was sidelined – almost permanently.

His testing crash at Silverstone was a terrifying experience, even for such a hardened old soul. Running on a near-empty circuit trying out experimental tyres for Goodyear, Brabham's car snapped into understeer at Club when the left-front tyre popped off its rim and deflated. Brabham hit the earth bank just a couple of feet back from the track on the outside of the fast right-hander, and the ensuing damage to the front-left corner trapped the dazed driver by his left ankle. That's when it got scary. In a considerable amount of pain, Jack couldn't switch off the ignition and fuel pump because the instrument panel had been buckled in the impact. He sat there for what felt like an age... and with fuel leaking on to the track.

"The throttle was jammed wide open, and behind me the ►



engine was absolutely shrieking,” he recalled. “I was seeing stars and flashes of coloured lights. The pain in my twisted and trapped legs and feet was just unbelievable... I bent back the bodywork just enough to jab the kill-switch with a finger-tip and the engine cut. The silence was deafening.” It was then that he chose to use his onboard fire extinguisher – a recent safety addition to F1 cars – to douse the glowing exhausts rather than wait for a fire to ignite. Finally the Brabham crew arrived on the scene, with young mechanic Ron Dennis taking charge to free the boss. His left ankle was a mess, and he wouldn’t return to racing until Monza in September.

That’s when Ickx, to his credit, stepped up. At Clermont-



BRABHAM BT26A

Ferrand for the French GP, he only just lost second place to Matra’s Jean-Pierre Beltoise after a terrific scrap, then inherited a runner-up finish at Silverstone when Rindt’s Lotus let him down after his own titanic duel with Stewart. Incidentally, that weekend Graham Hill made up for his own frustrations at Team Lotus by taking the Brabham out for a spin in one of the practice sessions, lapping quicker than Ickx. Imagine that today.

Then, the Nürburgring. Ickx took a superb pole from Stewart in 7m42.1s, just 0.3s ahead. In the race he initially only ran fourth, but passed Rindt and Jo Siffert, then caught and engaged leader Stewart. When the Scot began to struggle with gear selection problems, a great win was secured – at a circuit where Ickx always shone.

Another victory followed at the non-championship Oulton Park Gold Cup, but by Monza – where Ickx struggled with a down-on-power engine – there was already talk that he’d return to Ferrari for 1970. That would seal it for Jack. He had planned to retire, especially after the nasty scare at Silverstone. But without a team leader, what choice did he have? He’d roll out for one last and, as it turned out, memorable campaign for the first season of the new decade.

But for now there was a decade’s racing to finish – and in some style. In Canada, a year on from his own broken leg, Ickx led Brabham to a fine team one-two for his second points-scoring win of the year. Brabham then battled with Courage at Watkins Glen, where Rindt finally took his long-awaited maiden grand prix victory. Jack was less than impressed with the gloves-off duelling style of Frank Williams’s characterful

A SEASON OF MORE TURMOIL, THEN, BUT A FAIR SHARE OF SUCCESS TOO WITH THAT POTENT DFV BEHIND THE DRIVERS' SHOULDERS

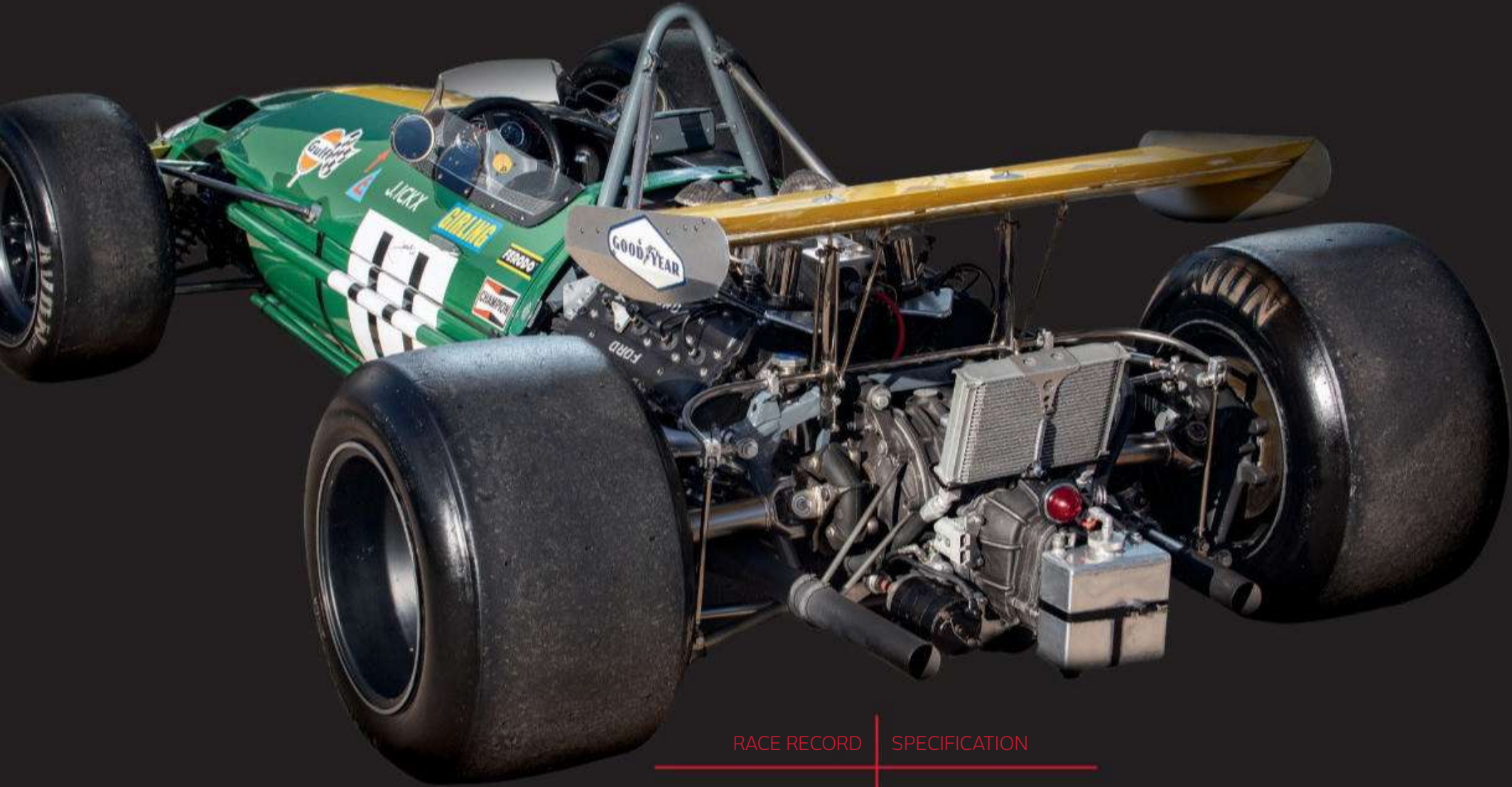
driver, who raced on the edge to flick stones back at his adversary. Pots and kettles...

Then at the Mexican finale Ickx and Brabham closed out the sixties with a two-three finish, behind Hulme's McLaren. Ickx was classified a distant second to dominant Stewart in the drivers' standings, with Brabham beating Lotus to runner-up in the constructors' by two points. A season of more turmoil, then, but a fair share of success too with that potent DFV behind the drivers' shoulders.

Today, the BT26A is something of a forgotten gem, sandwiched between the Repco-powered double title winners of 1966-67 and Jack's last-hurrah BT33 of '70, Tauranac's first full monocoque design. Chassis #3 pictured here, and currently for sale via historic racing specialist Fiskens, is the

Ickx car – the one in which he took victories at Oulton and Mosport, finished the season in Mexico, and also raced in France, the Netherlands and Spain. In its post-period F1 life, American Doug Champlin bought and raced it in the 1970 SCCA L&M Continental Championship series in the USA and Canada, then kept it for many years, before it was restored to its current 1969 Canadian GP spec under Roger Meiners' ownership in the mid-1980s – the right and obvious choice.

As for Ickx, his legacy tends to be dominated by the six Le Mans wins, while in F1 terms the years at Ferrari and Lotus catch the most attention. But his brief spell with Jack Brabham should not be overlooked – much like the neat, tidy and downright pretty F1 car he helped unlock from its underwhelming frustration. 



RACE RECORD	SPECIFICATION
Starts 52	Chassis Tubular steel spaceframe with stressed-skin sections
Wins 2	Suspension Double wishbones, coil springs over dampers, anti-roll bar
Pole positions 5	Engine Ford Cosworth DFV V8
Fastest laps 2	Engine capacity 2,993cc
Podiums 7	Power 410bhp @ 9000rpm
Championship points 53*	Gearbox Hewland DG300 5-speed manual
*Only the best-placed car from each manufacturer, best five results of the first six rounds, and best four of the last five rounds counted	Brakes Steel discs
	Tyres Goodyear
	Weight 500kg
	Notable drivers Jack Brabham, Jochen Rindt, Jacky Ickx, Piers Courage

PEDRO DE LA ROSA



10 THINGS I LOVE



The Aston Martin ambassador and former F1 driver on fishing, bikes and wonga-wangling



MotoGP

My cousin is Alberto Puig, the guy who used to race in 500cc with Mick Doohan and all those guys, so I had my own connection to the world of motorbikes and I still love MotoGP. I have a lot of respect for the riders, because they're the real heroes of motorsport. I saw my cousin get injured and still race – and the amount of pain they race with sometimes is just unbelievable. So I really admire them.



Studying data

This is something from my past as a test driver: I enjoy studying data and seeing how other drivers use different styles. When I was at McLaren, there were days where I had to drive first like Kimi Räikkönen and then like Juan Pablo Montoya straight after that. I had to find out how to make the car faster for each of them. Since then, every chance I get, I love looking at the data and seeing how different drivers operate, how they brake, how they steer, how they put throttle. I enjoy studying Fernando and Lance's data at Aston Martin, and I love seeing the GPS data from other cars – and all the information available. I used to go through a lot of data when I was an active test driver, and I still do it now.



Motocross

The thing I love most about motocross is that you just have to be creative. In cars there's more or less one line: you have to be precise and keep it clean. In motocross you have to deal with everything they throw at you. Literally. Stones, mud, dirt – every corner is different every time through it and the track changes all the time. Even though I'm really, really bad at it, I absolutely love it. I have a Honda CRF450R but I've had to be a lot more careful because every time I fall I hurt myself.



Cycling

It's a sport I didn't know much about until I met Alex Wurz. He sold me my first bike and then I started cycling with him. He's an incredible guy. He's smart and knows a lot, but he's especially good at cycling. He's a BMX world champion, after all. Every year we go on holiday to Mallorca. There's a mountain in San Salvador, just 500 metres high. At the end of summer, for the last 15 years, we do a competition to find out who is faster. I've only beaten him once, but it felt amazing! It's one of my favourite hobbies. It's good exercise for drivers too. It's an endurance challenge, almost like an F1 grand prix.



Matcha Tea

I love starting my morning with a bit of me-time, planning my day. And I always make sure I have my matcha tea. It gives me the energy I need to get through the day.

Fishing

I don't go fishing for big tuna or marlin or anything like that. It's just a hobby for me, so I mainly go for small fish, half a kilo or something like that. I find the process very relaxing and exciting at the same time. Every time you throw the rod into the water, you hope you'll catch a big one. It's almost as if you're a small kid again, full of hope to have the catch of the day. And it's a fantastic feeling.



PICTURES: ASTON MARTIN; ZAK MAUGER; SHUTTERSTOCK

Karting

A racing driver never really retires. I've finished my racing career, but I'm still doing a lot of karting. And my daughter is really into it too. She's 16 and we do a lot of karting together. Every Wednesday, when I'm home, I pick her up from school a bit earlier and we head to the track together. It's a lot of fun. I show her the lines, braking points and so on. She used to compete when she was 10 but didn't really like that side of the sport. And I'm not a pushy dad. Now it's just a fun father-and-daughter hobby, and it's really fantastic to have.



Financial markets

When I stopped racing, I took some wealth-management courses and focused on derivatives and options. I'm officially registered as a European financial advisor and have to go through a 30-hour course every year to keep my title. It's something I really enjoy, and is what I do with my investments. I'm always trying to keep up with developments and not lose track. I've just finished a 10-hour course, and I'm starting the next one, a 30-hour online course. When I'm by myself at the hotel I'll do an hour of online work, which keeps me busy and entertained. The only thing that frustrates me is that in all these years I haven't found anyone who shares my passion. When I start talking to my wife about it, she falls asleep.



Sailing

I have my power boat in Mallorca, and that's something I do a lot in the summer. I love waking up very early, getting in my boat and heading to the beautiful little island of Cabrera. I'll have breakfast there, swim and head back. It's such a lovely way to start the day.



Radio-controlled cars

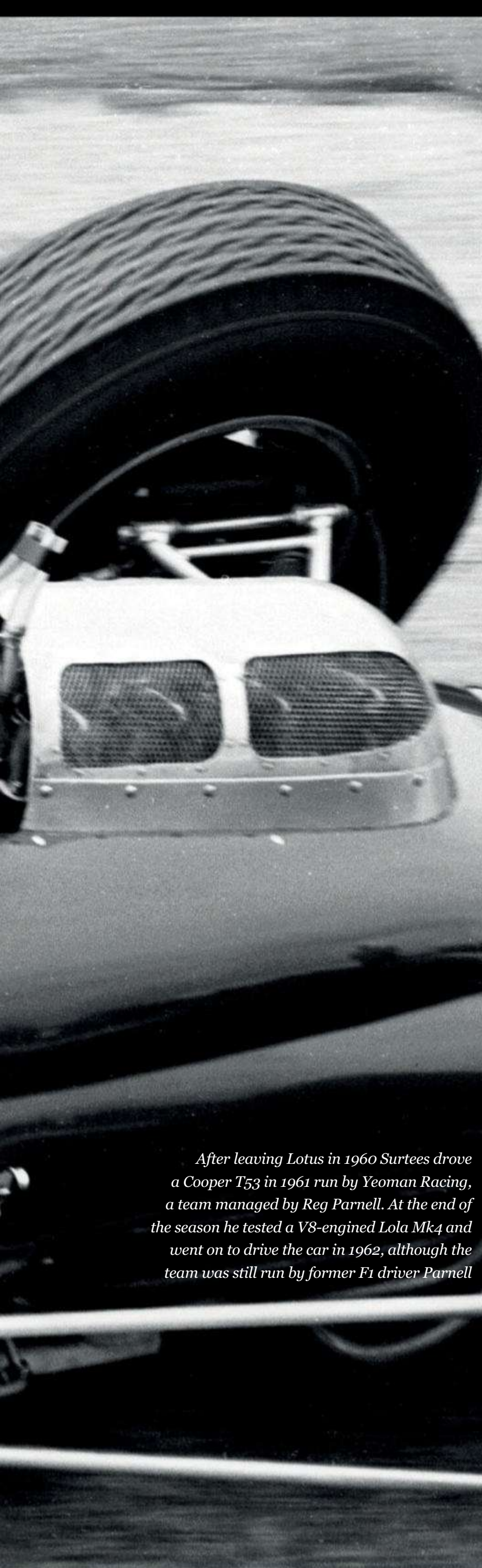
My father didn't want me to be a racing driver. My uncle died in a car accident, so I was told: "You can do remote-control cars, but not karting." When I was nine, I started competing. I was European champion twice and second in the world championship three times, in 1983, '84 and '86. I was good, but my dad was the best mechanic ever – so I always had the best car and we did a lot of testing at home. I think that's one of the reasons why I was good at testing F1 cars. Even though I wasn't driving those radio-controlled cars, I could feel how the changes we made affected the car's behaviour: the complexity of those cars is amazing and they're very sensitive to small changes. I learnt a lot from that.

JOHN SURTEES

It's 60 years since he became the only man to win world championships on two and four wheels

1962 was when Surtees came of age as an F1 driver. Piloting a Bowmaker Racing Lola Mk4 he managed back-to-back podiums in the British and German GPs, his second and third such results, to lie third in the championship at the time. He would eventually finish fourth in the standings





After leaving Lotus in 1960 Surtees drove a Cooper T53 in 1961 run by Yeoman Racing, a team managed by Reg Parnell. At the end of the season he tested a V8-engined Lola Mk4 and went on to drive the car in 1962, although the team was still run by former F1 driver Parnell

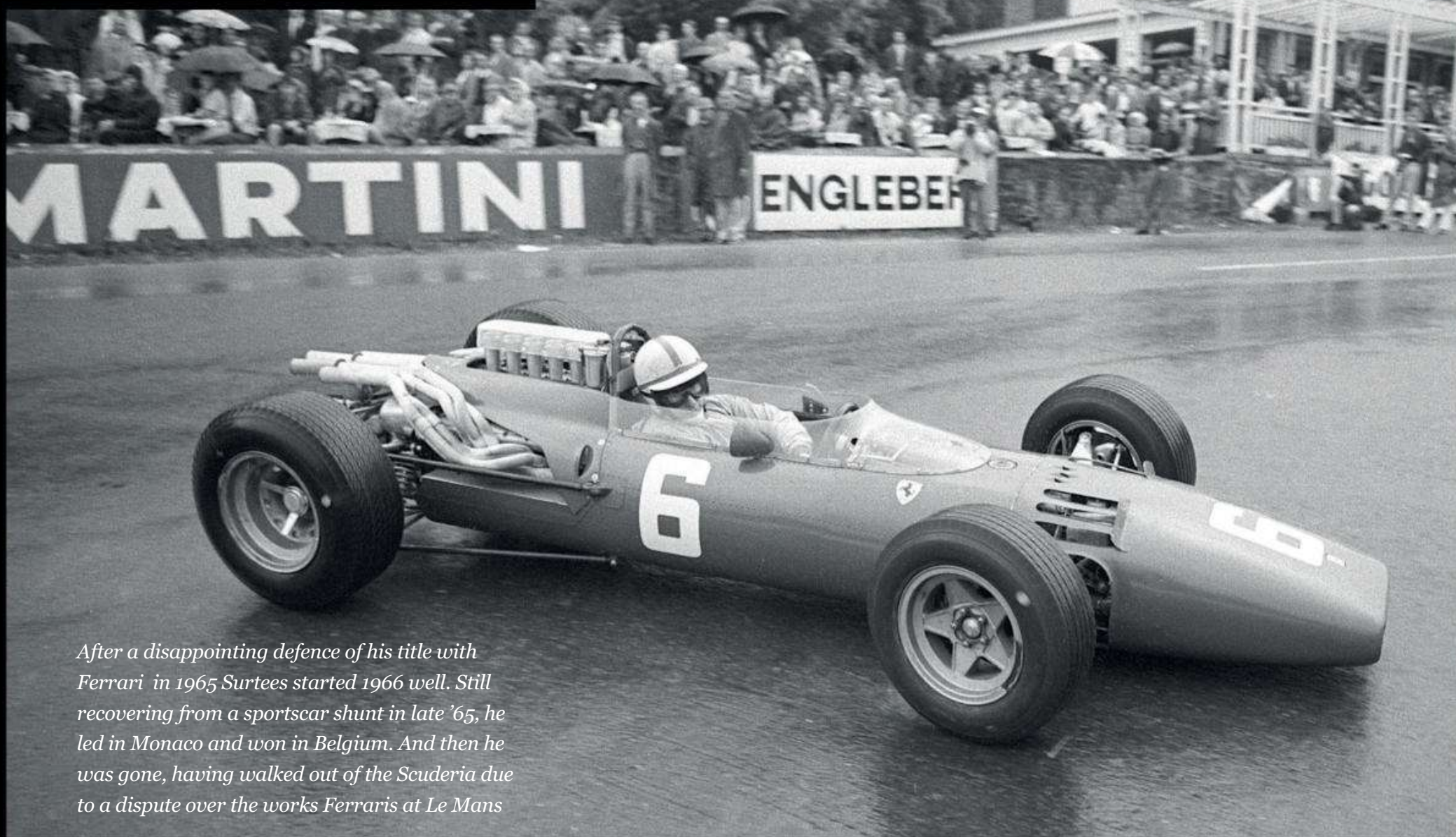


▲ During his time as a team owner Surtees caused a TV blackout of F1 in 1976 when Team Surtees secured a sponsorship deal with Durex condoms. The BBC argued that the logos, which Surtees refused to remove, weren't suitable for family viewing, only relenting for the last race in Japan



▲ Enzo Ferrari was known to be an admirer of Surtees and subsequently signed him to lead the team for the 1963 season. In his first F1 race for the Scuderia, the Monaco GP, he qualified third as the quickest Ferrari and ran second for a while, before fading oil pressure in his 156 saw him drop back to finish fourth





After a disappointing defence of his title with Ferrari in 1965 Surtees started 1966 well. Still recovering from a sportscar shunt in late '65, he led in Monaco and won in Belgium. And then he was gone, having walked out of the Scuderia due to a dispute over the works Ferraris at Le Mans



Surtees had already managed two podiums for Ferrari in 1963 by the time the championship reached the Nürburgring. He was destined for another podium until leader Jim Clark's Lotus went onto seven cylinders. Surtees took over the lead and cruised to his first F1 win



Surtees, like many of his contemporaries at the time, also raced in sportscars. In 1966 he competed in the inaugural CanAm season in North America, driving a Team Surtees-run Lola T70 Mk2. Surtees won three of the six rounds to claim the title ahead of Mark Donohue

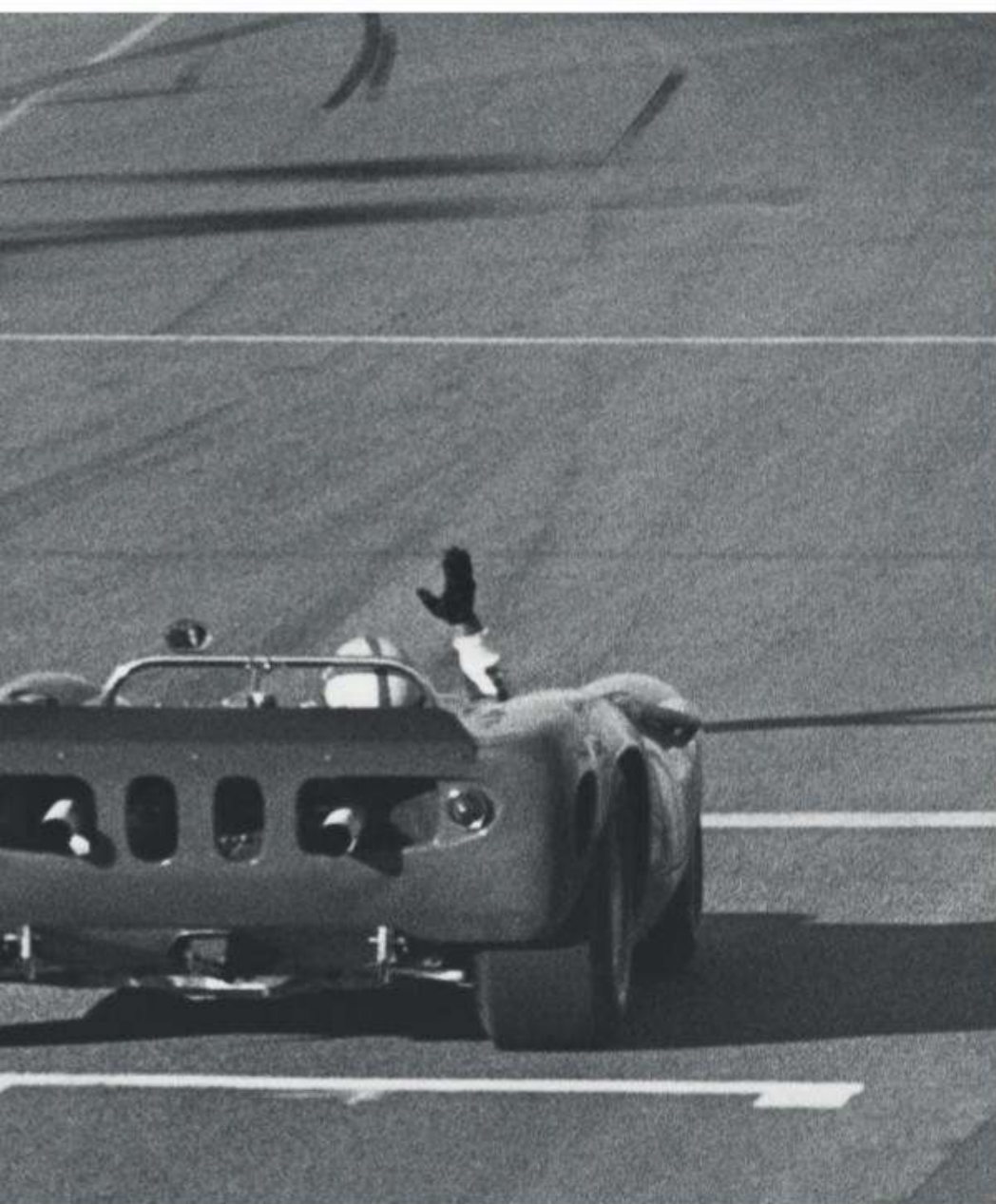




▲ In his second season at Ferrari Surtees achieved god-like status when he won for the Scuderia at Monza. He'd qualified his 158 on pole and this victory, his second of 1964, pushed him into contention for the title. And the whole of Monza wanted to congratulate the Briton afterwards

▲ For 1970 Surtees followed in the footsteps of Jack Brabham and Bruce McLaren and decided to build his own cars for F1. Delays meant the Surtees TS7 didn't appear until the eighth race of the season, the British GP. Surtees qualified the car 20th and retired from the race after 51 laps

▼ After he walked out on Ferrari in early 1966 Surtees switched to Cooper, winning the last race of the season in Mexico to finish second in the championship. Despite this he was intrigued by Honda's entry into F1 and tested the RA273 in December before signing for the team for 1967





▲
When Surtees finished second at the British GP in 1962, his second such result in three years, it seemed inevitable he would win his home race. He didn't though, with another three podiums and three further points finishes the closest he got to world championship success on home soil

▼
The move to Honda for 1967 proved successful for Surtees. At Monza he tasted victory, holding off Jack Brabham after Jim Clark, who had lost a lap with a puncture but re-taken the lead, suffered fuel issues on the last lap. It would be the last of John's six world championship wins





◀ Going into the last race of 1964, the Mexican GP, Surtees trailed Graham Hill in the title race, with Jim Clark also in the mix. On the last lap Surtees was third, with the championship destined for Clark – Hill was only eighth – until team-mate Lorenzo Bandini slowed to allow him past to claim the crown



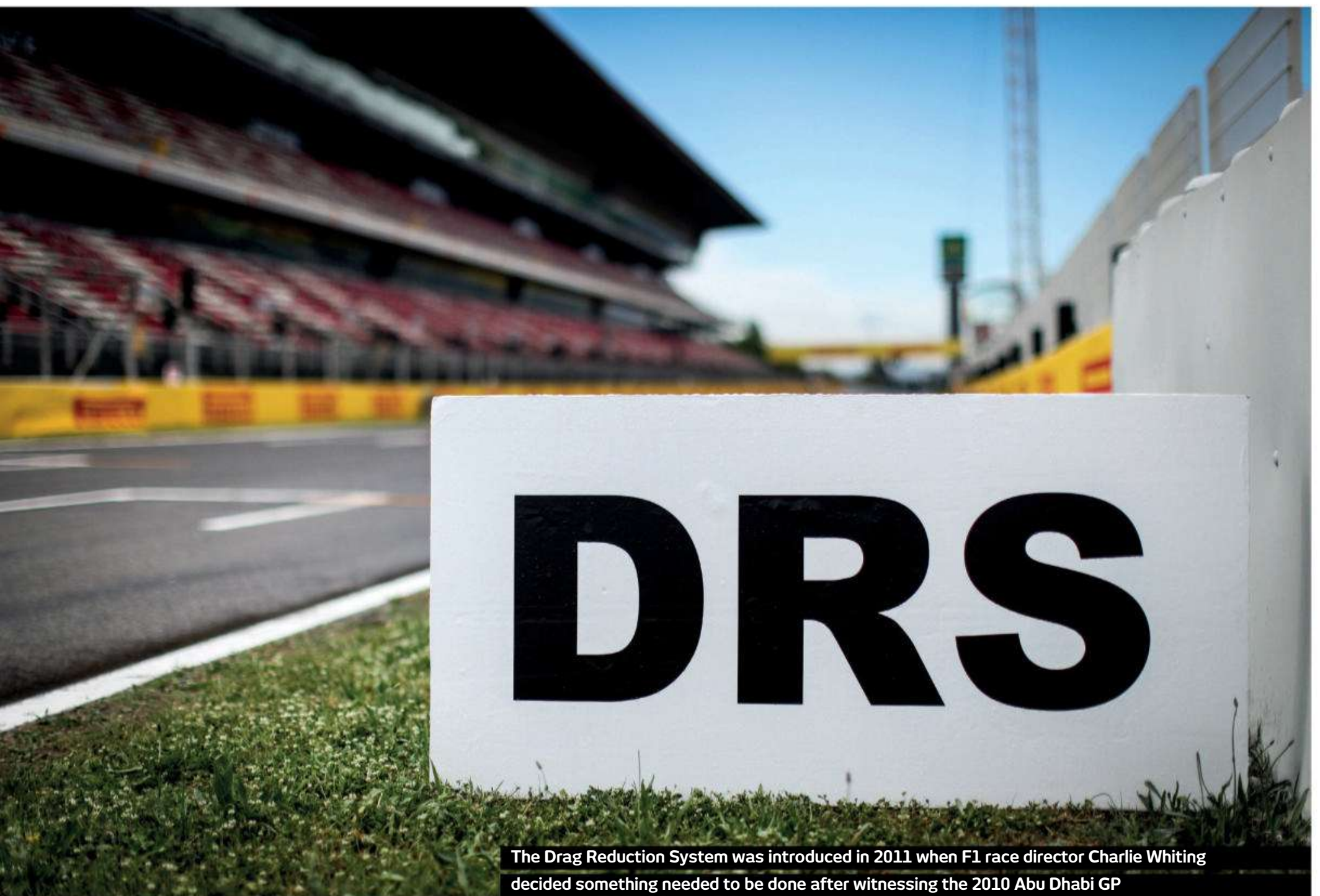
▲ Surtees raced in the Le Mans 24 Hours from 1963 to 1967. In 1964 he put the Ferrari 330P he shared with F1 team-mate Lorenzo Bandini on pole. He is the driver closest to the camera running to car 19 at the traditional Le Mans start. The pair eventually finished third



▲ Surtees's time as an F1 constructor lasted nine seasons and two podiums, for Mike Hailwood in 1972 and Carlos Pace in 1973, were its best results. In the last race of 1978 in Canada, with the team now struggling, Rene Arnoux did qualify a TS20 but retired with engine failure. A car was built for 1979 but without funds the team folded

◀ By 1972 Surtees had stepped back from driving, only to make a surprise re-appearance for round 10, the Italian GP at Monza. He retired after 20 laps but then practiced and qualified a car for the season-ending US GP at Watkins Glen too, before giving up his car for Tim Schenken

MAURICE HAMILTON'S ALTERNATIVE VIEW



The Drag Reduction System was introduced in 2011 when F1 race director Charlie Whiting decided something needed to be done after witnessing the 2010 Abu Dhabi GP

When even a multiple world champion renowned for his bravura overtaking starts complaining about being stuck in a DRS train, you have to wonder what this gimmick is actually achieving...

PICTURES  motorsport
IMAGES

IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FALL OUT with Charlie Whiting. Telling jokes was as much his stock-in-trade as reciting relevant passages of the FIA Sporting Regulations. Either way, the delivery would be gentle yet authoritative; serious yet underscored by an understanding and a twinkle generated through having previously worked on the same side of the fence as whoever was standing before him.

Whiting's presence as F1 race director remains as much-missed today as it was in the aftermath of his sudden death on the weekend of the 2019 Australian GP. Had Charlie been in Abu Dhabi two years later, it's a cast-iron certainty F1 would not be subjected to the social media convulsions that continue to blight the sport with dismal frequency today. Coincidentally, the Yas Marina circuit had been responsible for a Whiting-

inspired development less contentious in one respect, but irritating in another.

When the oil-rich Emirates failed to engineer a challenging race track on Yas Island, it was like Ferrari producing a car modelled on the Austin Allegro. The unimaginative layout aggravated a disastrous strategy call during the 2010 Abu Dhabi GP when Fernando Alonso found himself stuck behind a mid-grid Renault for most of the race. It effectively cost the Ferrari driver his third world championship.

Witnessing the dull deadlock and feeling something needed to be done, Whiting laid plans for a Drag Reduction System (DRS), a controversial artifice that has become accepted as the norm. Charlie and I agreed on most things, but DRS was not one of them.

Seeing DRS as his personal project, no amount



In this year's Belgian GP Max Verstappen wasn't able to breeze through the field as he did in 2022, following an engine penalty, due to the shortening of the DRS zone from Raidillon to Les Combes

of gentle criticism would change Charlie's stance on how F1 had been improved as a result. The ability of cars to overtake more easily could not be denied. But that was like saying there would be more goals in football if the goalmouth was extended by a third. 13 seasons on, DRS is not only still with us but it is also as permanent as tyre degradation or Christian Horner appearing in front of a TV camera. DRS has become part of tactical play and occasionally affects the view of race stewards on how races should be run.

Take Brazil 2018 as an example. There was a collision when Esteban Ocon tried to unlap himself and ended up costing Max Verstappen what would have been his sixth GP win. Although agreeing Ocon had the extra speed (thanks to fresh tyres) and, technically, every right to make the move, the stewards said there was no need for such aggression particularly, it was noted, because the Frenchman could have used DRS to sweep past Mac on the next straight. DRS was being accepted as a significant game changer just as surely as night follows day. Or, in this case, as surely as a hostile history between these two in karts and F3 would continue as Max sought out Esteban and knocked him off the weighing scales.

The timing of Verstappen's outburst was unfortunate from Whiting's point of view. On the flight back from the previous race in Mexico (won by Verstappen) Charlie had taken the opportunity to have an informal catch-up with Max. At the end of it, Whiting told a reporter that Verstappen had matured considerably since his days as a stropky F1 novice. Charlie's personal thoughts were not recorded when school was out a few days later in parc fermé at Interlagos.

Max's physical assault may have been triggered by a verbal insult sharpened on personal intelligence gleaned by Esteban during their days in the karting kindergarten, but Verstappen received two days of 'community service' as punishment. What seemed a soft reprimand was,



The rear wing opening and extra speed it brings has now been part and parcel of F1 for 13 seasons

in fact, a shrewd move instigated by Whiting. Max would later say he now appreciated the sport's bigger picture after time spent with officials during a Formula E meeting in Marrakech.

Were he still with us at this year's Hungarian GP, Whiting would likely have been disappointed and surprised by Verstappen's disdain for the work of others – notably, Hannah Schmitz, Red Bull's consistently brilliant strategist. After a string of victories for Verstappen, a failure to not

**CHARLIE'S PERSONAL
THOUGHTS WERE NOT
RECORDED WHEN
SCHOOL WAS OUT A
FEW DAYS LATER**

even come close to his 62nd prompted a petulant torrent of abuse driven by a sense of entitlement.

A week later in Belgium, what Max had to say was invective free but would surely have been of a different concern to Charlie, mainly because of his belief in DRS. "I was stuck in the DRS train and basically just stayed there," said Verstappen. "It was difficult to pass."

Hang on! DRS is supposed to make overtaking easier. And this coming from the driver who had



Whiting was convinced that F1 had been improved because of DRS

started 14th at Spa in 2022, only to lead after 12 laps. It seemed as contradictory and confusing as most of the self-serving statements emanating these days from the president of the FIA.

In effect, the DRS zone from Raidillon to Les Combes had been too long in 2022. The quality of driver and car allowed Verstappen and the RB18 to make the opposition appear pedestrian and F1 look foolish. This year, the FIA reduced the DRS zone by 75 metres. Which was like using a scythe instead of scissors – that's if you believed the poor souls who could no longer push to pass. Mind you, it didn't prevent Oscar Piastri from sitting it out with Charles Leclerc; a potent reminder of what motor racing is supposed to be all about.

You can bet all this will be forgotten when the problem is 'fixed' next time by extending the DRS zone by 25 metres, or whatever it takes to continue papering over F1's fundamental fault line – which is that these hefty trucks masquerading as the pinnacle of F1 design can't actually go racing. Even Charlie Whiting might be hard pressed to see the funny side of that one.



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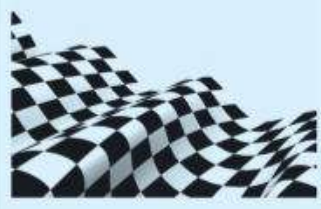
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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 15

THE DUTCH GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS

1 McLaren updates erase Red Bull's last advantage

McLaren has been threatening to have the fastest car in F1 all year and, after Lando Norris's performance in Zandvoort, it looks as though that threshold has been crossed. At the second shortest track of the year (after Monaco), Norris qualified 0.356s faster than local hero Max Verstappen – and then, after a tardy start, he comfortably won the Dutch Grand Prix by an impressive 22.8 seconds, the largest winning margin of any race this season. It was a clear statement of intent.

You have to rewind to Monza in 2012 to find the last time a McLaren driver (Lewis Hamilton) won from pole position. According to McLaren team principal Andrea Stella, the "objective" is to ensure that level of supremacy at every circuit.

"It was great that Lando could capitalise with a dominant victory," said Stella, who has recently extended his contract with the team. "In the past [our pace] has been circuit dependent but now

we've upgraded the car, let's see if it's the best at every single venue."

McLaren was invigorated after the two-week summer shutdown. A few teams arrived at the Dutch seaside town with nothing new. In contrast, the Woking outfit introduced a slew of updates.

These included a new front brake scoop and revised front suspension, introduced to improve aero without compromising brake cooling. The MCL36 also featured a revised floor edge, modified rear suspension and a circuit-specific new higher-downforce rear and beam wing to increase overall efficiency. A new DRS system also helped straight-line speed in qualifying.

For much of last year, Red Bull appeared to enjoy a substantial advantage over rivals' cars with DRS open. It took the other teams a surprisingly long time to work out that Red Bull's trick was to combine a highly effective underfloor with an

oversized main element on the rear wing, and a relatively slim lower beam wing. With DRS open it therefore shed more drag than others. McLaren, like others, has been experimenting here and the latest update to the MCL36 seems to have cracked it.

In Lando's hands, it flew. So when he made another less-than-satisfactory start, he didn't panic, knowing he had the car to overhaul and beat Verstappen's Red Bull. Off the line Norris picked up a touch of wheelspin (as did his team-mate Oscar Piastri behind) and Max was ahead well before the turn-in to the first corner, Tarzan.

While the data showed that Lando's reaction time to the red lights extinguishing was identical to Max's, his acceleration to 124mph took 5.64s while Verstappen was 0.41s quicker reaching the same speed. The similarity between Norris and team-mate Piastri in terms of loss suggested it was a technical matter rather than a fault of driver input.



In the hands of Norris McLaren comfortably had the fastest car in Zandvoort. His second F1 win was a dominant one, by over 22 seconds

PICTURES: ANDREW FERRARO



The remains of Sargeant's car are returned to the paddock after his FP3 shunt. Zandvoort would prove to be the American's last race

During the opening phase of the race, Norris maintained a gap of around 1.5s to the leader and remained patient. Red Bull had set up Max's car with relatively high levels of downforce after rain disrupted practice – but this came at a cost in straightline speed and, crucially, didn't confer an advantage in terms of protecting the tyres. Sure enough, by lap 17 Verstappen was complaining of a lack of grip and described his tyres as "numb." A lap later, Norris pulled out from behind the Red Bull's wake to take the lead heading into Tarzanbocht. Max's defence was atypically apathetic.

Thereafter the papaya-coloured machine pulled out a comfortable lead. And in a Verstappen-esque sign of superiority, banged in the fastest lap of the race on the final tour. In his friend's – and rival's – back yard he even had the cheek to mimic Max's catchphrase. "Simply lovely, eh?" said Norris on team radio, after he'd crossed the line to record his second-ever grand prix win.

"We know we don't need to panic," was Red Bull boss Christian Horner's summary of what happened at Zandvoort, though the fact that Max was running an older-spec floor suggested confidence in the development trajectory is low.

But the reality is the gap in the constructors' championship has been reduced to 30 points. It's been 26 years since McLaren last brought that trophy home...

2 Sargeant triggers a Vowles movement

It was 1998, in Mika Häkkinen's first title-winning season, when McLaren last took the championship double. Just a year earlier Williams secured its last constructors' crown. But while the Woking team is on the up, Williams is still mired in the midfield, despite the changes of ownership and leadership in recent years. Although the trajectory of the past two seasons has generally been encouraging, a disastrous Saturday at Zandvoort represented what team boss James Vowles will hope is the nadir of his regime.

It began when Logan Sargeant lost control of his car on the damp grass, on the exit of the banked Hugenholtzbocht, during a wet FP3 on Saturday morning. He reversed at high speed into the barriers and severely damaged his FW46. A small fire started on what was left of the engine cover. Despite the team's best efforts after a lengthy red-flag stoppage the car wasn't ready for qualifying.

Worse than that, and the expense incurred in terms of new parts needing to be produced, Sargeant had destroyed the new upgrade package. Williams had arrived at Zandvoort with a raft of updates, including a new floor body,

diffuser, sidepod inlet, engine cover and air intake. Aerodynamic performance and lightweighting were the priorities. To make matters worse, Alex Albon was subsequently stripped of his qualifying times when his new floor was declared illegal.

Detailed changes to the front of the floor and the local fence curvatures were designed to improve air flow around the rear of the car but, despite the team's own equipment measuring it within the permitted tolerances, the FIA's laser scanners found it 3mm too wide during a random check. It's believed the area in question was the section ahead of the rear tyres. Regardless of whether a light touch of sandpaper was enough to make it legal again, Albon had to start from the back of the grid. Williams was unable to understand or account for the disparity with its own measurements.

"This isn't the standard I want us to hold ourselves to this weekend," said Vowles, "but let's now make a process change to ensure that it doesn't happen again."

It was a disappointing weekend for Albon, who had qualified an impressive eighth before that time was scratched. In a largely uneventful Sunday which featured no retirements or even a yellow flag, Albon and Sargeant finished 14th and 16th. It proved to be Logan's last outing with Williams as Vowles decided to replace him with Argentinian F2 driver Franco Colapinto from Monza onwards. ▶



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 15



PICTURES: SAM BLOXHAM; ANDY HONE; SIMON GALLOWAY

After a run of race-winning performances Mercedes was perplexed as to why it was unable to compete for top honours in Holland

3 "Head scratching" needed at Mercedes

After winning three of the four races before the summer shutdown, Mercedes was stumped by a dip in performance at Zandvoort. George Russell managed to pass Piastri for third on the opening corner, but then dropped down the order. A second, late stop meant he finished seventh – just ahead of team-mate Lewis Hamilton, who had started 14th.

But conditions and track time had conspired to impact a number of runners over the weekend. Cool track temperatures didn't suit the Mercedes and extremely gusty conditions further impacted the car's aero balance. And come the race, tyre degradation was higher than expected – in contrast to that experienced by many of the other runners.

"We're just surprised by the lack of pace," said Russell. "We just went backwards and we don't really know what happened. In the last six races we've been ahead of Ferrari, but today they looked really competitive."

Team boss Toto Wolff said there would be "lots of head scratching" and "looking at data".



The inconsistencies in track temperature caused Hamilton to miss out on Q3 in qualifying, then he was given a three-place grid penalty for impeding Sergio Pérez. Running on the soft tyre in the first stint he at least went forward in the race, converging with his team-mate at the flag.

Mercedes' off form did benefit Ferrari as Charles Leclerc picked up third – his second consecutive

podium finish. In contrast Carlos Sainz suffered a gearbox problem on Friday, which meant he was playing catch-up for the rest of the weekend.

4 Haas gets a visit from the heavy mob

The first red flag came on Friday afternoon. The rear of Nico Hülkenberg's Haas locked up as he approached Tarzan, and he spun into the Turn 1 barriers. The cause was attributed to a gust of wind that had blown in off the North Sea. While he emerged unscathed, another type of headwind was blowing in Haas's corner of the paddock.

An unwelcome visit from the bailiffs had occurred the previous day. Cars and equipment had been evaluated in the pitlane following an order from a Dutch court. Former Haas partner Uralkali – part of the sponsorship that came with Russian racer Nikita Mazepin – claimed the team had missed a July deadline for the refund of monies paid in advance before the sponsorship was annulled when Russia invaded Ukraine.

Haas was allowed to participate, but wasn't



Haas was able to run its cars, despite a surprise visit from bailiffs acting on an order from a Dutch court

allowed to remove cars and equipment until a sum of money had been paid – believed to be \$9m.

The team also caused a kerfuffle in the race with a split strategy in which Hülkenberg stopped early to undercut the cars in front, then stayed out to the end on hard-compound tyres with team-mate Kevin Magnussen acting as rear gunner. In contrast Magnussen had started on the hard tyres.

As usual K-Mag’s defensive tactics were robust, leading to a chaotic moment at the end of lap 39 when five cars rounded the banked final turn.

5

Steady start for Oakes

Pierre Gasly is something of a Zandvoort specialist. It was the scene of his only podium last

season and a strong weekend this time around enabled the Frenchman to record his first points since Austria. A battling, combative drive – which included a number of bold overtakes around the outside of Tarzan – netted him ninth place. And it was Alpine’s second points finish in a row.

The result will have given the new Enstone double act of Flavio Briatore and Oliver Oakes something to smile about. Oakes, owner of successful junior team Hitech, had only been in his new role as Alpine’s team principal for a week.

In contrast to Gasly, Esteban Ocon had a somewhat anonymous weekend, missing the cut for Q2 and then losing ground at the start to the Stake of Valtteri Bottas (who, like Lewis Hamilton, was an outlier on soft tyres). Thereafter he struggled to make progress towards the top 10 and was relieved of 14th place by Alex Albon three laps from the end.

Gasly brought some cheer to Alpine and new team principal Oliver Oakes with a battling run to finish in the points in ninth



RESULTS ROUND 15

ZANDVOORT / 25.08.24 / 72 LAPS



1st	Lando Norris McLaren	1h30m45.519s
2nd	Max Verstappen Red Bull	+22.896s
3rd	Charles Leclerc Ferrari	+25.439s
4th	Oscar Piastri McLaren	+27.337s
5th	Carlos Sainz Ferrari	+32.137s
6th	Sergio Pérez Red Bull	+39.542s
7th	George Russell Mercedes	+44.617s
8th	Lewis Hamilton Mercedes	+49.599s
9th	Pierre Gasly Alpine	+1 lap
10th	Fernando Alonso Aston Martin	+1 lap
11th	Nico Hülkenberg Haas	+1 lap
12th	Daniel Ricciardo RB	+1 lap
13th	Lance Stroll Aston Martin	+1 lap*
14th	Alex Albon Williams	+1 lap
15th	Esteban Ocon Alpine	+1 lap
16th	Logan Sargeant Williams	+1 lap
17th	Yuki Tsunoda RB	+1 lap
18th	Kevin Magnussen Haas	+1 lap
19th	Valtteri Bottas Stake	+2 laps
20th	Zhou Guanyu Stake	+2 laps

*includes 5s penalty for speeding in the pitlane

Retirements

Fastest lap

Lando Norris 1m13.817s on lap 72

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED

Hard (C1)Medium (C2)Soft (C3)InterWet

CLIMATE

Sunny

AIR TEMP

19°C

TRACK TEMP

28°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS			
1	Verstappen	295pts	11 Hülkenberg 22pts
2	Norris	225pts	12 Tsunoda 22pts
3	Leclerc	192pts	13 Ricciardo 12pts
4	Piastri	179pts	14 Gasly 8pts
5	Sainz	172pts	15 Bearman 6pts
6	Hamilton	154pts	16 Magnussen 5pts
7	Pérez	139pts	17 Ocon 5pts
8	Russell	122pts	18 Albon 4pts
9	Alonso	50pts	19 Guanyu 0pts
10	Stroll	24pts	20 Sargeant 0pts
			21 Bottas 0pts





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 16

THE ITALIAN GP
IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS



PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; SAM BAGNALL

For once Ferrari nailed a race strategy, and what better place to do it than in front of the tifosi, Leclerc repeating his 2019 victory at Monza

1 Near-perfect Leclerc nails emotional home win

It had been five long years but, finally, the church bells rang out in Maranello again to celebrate a home win for Ferrari at the Italian GP. Charles Leclerc sent the fanatical tifosi into ecstatic delight as he held on to score a dream result for the Scuderia. A victory hadn't looked on the cards until Ferrari gambled on a one-stop strategy which both drivers executed beautifully. The crowd sensed this might be the day, as the two scarlet cars stayed out on track while their nearest rivals peeled into the pits for a second time.

In the closing stages of the 53-lap race, each time Leclerc and wingman Carlos Sainz passed the pits, the main grandstand opposite erupted into cheers, everyone willing their worn Pirellis to last the distance.

Behind the scarlet cars, the McLarens were closing in – albeit not fast enough. Both Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris overtook Sainz, but the margin to Leclerc was too large to overcome. Piastri

was told by McLaren he needed to hit 1m22.0s each lap to make the catch and he only managed this twice in his final stint, ultimately coming up 2.7s short (Lance Stroll didn't help, holding up Piastri to the tune of half a second while being lapped). In the closing laps McLaren could only hope for Leclerc to make a mistake or for his tyres to give up – but, despite the pressure of performing in front of the home crowd, Charles 'introduced' his tyres carefully at the beginning of his final stint and nursed them to the finish, adding Monza to his Monaco victory earlier in the year.

"Just like in 2019 [his last Italian GP win], in the last laps it was quite difficult to keep my eyes on the track as I was looking at the grandstands," said Leclerc. "I could see everyone standing up and some red smoke, so I knew everybody was super-excited. I also knew that I had to finish the job and stay on it because Oscar had a really good pace.

"I think for the whole of Ferrari there are lots

of high expectations for the team members here. They all have at least one family member or very close friend in the grandstand. Everybody wants to do super-well in Italy, lots of Italians travelling from all over the country to cheer for us. So you also want to do well for the big support we have, and that adds a little bit to the pressure. But that's also what makes winning in Monza so special, it's because of the crazy support we have."

The teams had arrived at this famous Milanese royal park to discover the track had been resurfaced and the kerbs lowered. Traditionally tyre degradation is low at Monza but the new, darker asphalt, in combination with high temperatures, induced fears of degradation which transformed the Italian GP from a nailed-on one-stopper to a probable two-stop race. But as thunderstorms bubbled up around the Lombardy region on race day, the cloud cover that appeared across Monza lowered the track temperatures by more than ten



Qualifying went to plan (below) but Piastri's move on Norris (above) in the race didn't and was just within McLaren's 'papaya rules'



degrees. That, along with evolution of the new surface, was enough to help the one-stoppers.

Ferrari had prepared for its home race with a significant update including a new floor and diffuser, along with circuit-specific upgrades that included revised front and rear wings. While Leclerc and Sainz were beaten to the front row of the grid by the McLarens in qualifying, Saturday's session was extremely tight. The margin between Sainz's P5 time and Norris's pole lap was just 0.14s.

In hindsight, could McLaren have also one-stopped and eclipsed the Maranello machines? Probably not – team boss Andrea Stella explained that the MCL38 is "on the aggressive side" in terms of front graining, which was the issue here. And even in the race Leclerc had a crisis of confidence in the one-stop when he was informed that the Red Bulls, which had started on the hard-compound Pirellis he planned to take in the second stint, were experiencing graining as early as lap 10.

What really made the one-stop strategy work for Leclerc was the effect of the new rear wing, which achieved the balance necessary to avoid grain-inducing understeer in the faster corners, and Leclerc's own iron discipline. In his epic final stint,

after a cautious out-lap he did just two tours in the 1m24s bracket, hitting 1m23s over the final 33 laps in a remarkable feat of consistency. It was these barely visible details as much as his daring lap-one pass of Lando Norris for second place which put him in the position to secure a memorable victory.

2 Risk-averse McLaren rethinking "papaya rules"

At the start, all eyes were on the McLaren duo on the front row. Could polesitter Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri race and keep it clean?

What unfolded naturally came to dominate the narrative on Sunday evening as McLaren and the rest of the world digested the reasons for the fastest team not winning the race. At the usually contentious first corner Norris held on to the lead ahead of Piastri while third-place qualifier George Russell had to check up unexpectedly and take to the escape road. That afforded Charles Leclerc the opportunity to latch on to the back of the McLarens and take advantage of what happened next.

As they approached the Roggia chicane, Piastri went to the outside and made a brave – some would say forceful – move on his team-mate. Lando was caught fractionally off guard. He avoided contact and conceded the lead to Oscar. Having lost momentum, Norris was easy prey for Leclerc.

Piastri remained ahead of Norris for the rest of the race, fine for McLaren's constructors' points haul (though losing the 1-2 meant it missed the chance to draw level on points) but sub-optimal for Norris's pursuit of Max Verstappen in the drivers' standings. Max struggled and could only manage sixth after an engine issue meant he couldn't run full power; this is the sort of opportunity on which McLaren should be capitalising.

"I feel like he got way too close for comfort," said a despondent Norris when asked about Piastri's move. "Oscar braked on the limit and gave me space. It was just about enough. I did my best to avoid anything happening, but if I braked two metres later it could easily have been a crash. I obviously took it easy, saw a massive gap behind, so I was a bit too cautious and paid the price."

Watching from the pitwall, CEO Zak Brown described the move as "aggressive" but added McLaren's philosophy has always been to run two 'number one' drivers and they are free to race as long as they adhere to the "papaya rules" which means they must not collide with each other. But with Max in trouble and races running out, is it time for McLaren to throw its weight behind one driver?

Team principal Andrea Stella alluded to this when asked if Piastri's move contravened McLaren's internal code. "We will take the learning, if there is any learning we need to take," he said. "Then we will adjust the papaya rules such that they allow us to pursue in the best possible manner both the constructors' and drivers' championships."

The McLarens were pushing hard in the early stages, intent on their two-stop plan. Norris came in on lap 15, one tour before Leclerc, and undercut him. But both McLarens fell behind Leclerc when they made their second stops. What tipped McLaren into being risk-averse was the behaviour of the tyres during the long runs in FP2 on Friday, where graining made the front axle prone to lock-ups which would have proved disastrous in race conditions.

"We felt early on that it was a two-stop race," explained Piastri. "In hindsight there are things we could have done differently from a strategy and driving point of view to keep our options open a little bit more. It seemed it was a case of sticking with the graining and getting through it, but in practice [FP2], what happened is you couldn't hit the brake pedal as it turned the left-front into a 50-cent coin. So it seemed like a very risky thing to do." ▶



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 16



Magnussen's attempt to get past Gasly resulted into two penalty points and, unfortunately, will now miss the next race

PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; ZAK MAUGER; SAM BLOXHAM; SAM BAGNALL; ANDY HONE

3 Points don't make prizes for Magnussen

Collecting another two penalty points at Monza meant Kevin Magnussen became the first F1 driver to earn a one-race ban since his one-time team-mate Romain Grosjean was forced to sit out the 2012 Italian GP following a lap-one incident in the previous round. At the time, Grosjean's ban was an ad hoc measure after a season littered with shunts; since 2014 a more rigorous system of penalty points has been in place, under which drivers who collect 12 points over a rolling 12-month period are automatically banned for one race.

Magnussen will miss the next race in Baku after a collision with Alpine's Pierre Gasly while battling over 14th place at Monza. Despite being alongside at the first apex of the Roggia chicane, Magnussen locked up and made contact so the stewards determined that the move was not made "in a safe and controlled manner." The result was a 10-second time penalty and two points – which even Gasly considered harsh.

"With Gasly we had slight contact, there was no damage and he just missed the corner," said a livid Magnussen. "That's racing. I don't know why

we need to throw penalties around like this. Nico [Hülkenberg] was almost thrown into the wall by [Daniel] Ricciardo at 300km/h and only got a five-second penalty. I got 10. It doesn't add up."

Carrying the penalty for the rest of the race, Magnussen drove superbly to keep Fernando Alonso just out of reach. When the 10s was applied at the flag, Kevin had done enough to secure a point for 10th place by just 0.193 seconds.

The incident between Hülkenberg and Ricciardo came on the opening lap as Nico dropped two wheels onto the dirt approaching the Ascari chicane, sending a plume of brown dust into the air. Closer review showed the RB driver moving over on the Haas, earning him the five-second pit penalty – which was joined by an additional 10s penalty after an RB mechanic accidentally touched the front wing when he came in to serve it.

4 Assured debut for Franco Colapinto

Before the Italian Grand Prix, rookie Franco Colapinto had never done more than eight consecutive laps in an F1 car. Having been drafted in at short notice – the announcement was the

Tuesday before Monza – the Argentine replaces Logan Sargeant at Williams for the remainder of the season and was chosen ahead of Mick Schumacher. Indeed, the quietly impressive way with which Colapinto went about making his F1 race debut was somewhat overshadowed by a war of words as team boss James Vowles was hauled over the coals for saying Mick was "good rather than special".

Despite running wide through the gravel in Q1 qualifying (to line up 18th), Colapinto finished a respectable 12th. He was less than 14 seconds behind Williams team-mate Alex Albon at the flag. When Franco crossed the finish line, the number 43 car received a radio message from the boss.

"That is a fantastic first race," said Vowles. "You really didn't put a foot wrong. You finished a few seconds behind Alex. If you keep it clean, you're there and able to fight. Well done. I can't wait to see how we build together." In response Colapinto revealed that he was in a lot of pain, adding adjustments need to be made to his seat.

"It's not bad for a first drive, as I had a lot of question marks going into the race as I'd never done more than eight laps before in an F1 car," said the 21-year old. "I then had to do 53 laps with the highest track temperatures of the weekend. It was always going to be a tough race with the rears, but the car was strong."

Colapinto managed well on his promotion in the second Williams seat, despite his very limited experience of F1 machinery



5 Fans enjoy a two-Kimi weekend

It would be remiss to not mention one driver who didn't start the Italian GP, but who was nevertheless among the most talked about. And we're not referencing the rare appearance by Kimi Räikkönen in the Sauber garage.

On Saturday morning Andrea Kimi Antonelli was confirmed as Mercedes' replacement for Lewis Hamilton next year. The teenage sensation was born on August 25, 2006, just 16 days before that historic day when Michael Schumacher announced his retirement after winning at Monza – with his replacement at Ferrari confirmed to be Räikkönen.

A tale of two Kimis: Antonelli had a brief first FP1 run for Mercedes, as Räikkönen (and son Robin) visited his old friends at Sauber



The 18-year old enjoyed his first public run in an F1 car on Friday morning for Mercedes. Outside his garage, photographers and camera crews jostled for a shot of him in the car. His first flying lap put him at the top of the timesheets. He then went even quicker. Indeed, he drove the Ascari chicane faster than anyone did that entire session.

Unfortunately he then tried to do the same at Parabolica and smote the barriers, ending a thoroughly dramatic 10 minutes. Mercedes publicly affirmed that this did nothing to change the contract situation for next year – indeed, *GP Racing* was amused to see our former colleague Bradley Lord, now Mercedes' multi-lingual press attaché, spinning the positives thus: "It is unfortunate, but he was on the limit, pushing from lap one, so that is good to see, it is all part of the learning curve."

RESULTS ROUND 16

MONZA / 01.09.24 / 53 LAPS



1st	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	1h14m40.727s
2nd	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+2.664s
3rd	Lando Norris	McLaren	+6.153s
4th	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+15.621s
5th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+22.820s
6th	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	+37.932s
7th	George Russell	Mercedes	+39.715s
8th	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+54.148s
9th	Alex Albon	Williams	+67.456s
10th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+68.302s*
11th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+68.495s
12th	Franco Colapinto	Williams	+81.308s
13th	Daniel Ricciardo	RB	+93.452s**
14th	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	+1 lap
15th	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+1 lap
16th	Valtteri Bottas	Stake	+1 lap
17th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+1 lap
18th	Zhou Guanyu	Stake	+1 lap
19th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+1 lap

*includes 5s penalty for forcing another driver off the track and 10s penalty for failing to serve time penalty correctly

Retirements

Yuki Tsunoda RB 7 laps/damage

Fastest lap

Lando Norris 1m21.432s on lap 53

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



CLIMATE

Sunny

AIR TEMP

34°C

TRACK TEMP

52°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen	303pts	11 Hülkenberg	22pts
2 Norris	241pts	12 Tsunoda	22pts
3 Leclerc	217pts	13 Ricciardo	12pts
4 Piastri	197pts	14 Gasly	8pts
5 Sainz	184pts	15 Bearman	6pts
6 Hamilton	164pts	16 Magnussen	6pts
7 Pérez	143pts	17 Albon	6pts
8 Russell	128pts	18 Ocon	5pts
9 Alonso	50pts	19 Guanyu	0pts
10 Stroll	24pts	20 Sargeant	0pts
		21 Colapinto	0pts
		22 Bottas	0pts





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 18

SINGAPORE GP

20-22 September 2024
Marina Bay

PICTURE: JAKE GRANT; ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDRIDGE



RACE DATA

Venue Marina Bay
Street Circuit
First GP 2008
Number of laps 62
Circuit length 3.062 miles
Race distance 190.228 miles
Lap record 1m 35.867 secs
Lewis Hamilton (2023)
F1 races held 14
Winners from pole 9
Pirelli compounds TBA

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level High
Cooling requirement High
Full throttle 45%
Top speed 190mph
Average speed 104mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 20 September
Practice 1 10:30-11:30
Practice 2 14:00-15:00
Saturday 21 September
Practice 3 10:30-11:30
Qualifying 14:00-15:00
Sunday 22 September
Race 13:00
Live coverage Sky Sports F1
Highlights Channel 4

THE MAIN EVENT

Singapore is such a densely populated and highly developed city state that it takes the hosting of a GP in its stride. A few streets from the circuit you'll find people who are barely aware there's a race going on. Only the taxi drivers seem to complain – with them it's less popular than someone taking a stinky durian fruit on the Metro.

This event was the first to be conceived as a night race under artificial light, coinciding with F1 embracing high-definition TV. As such the aerial footage is spectacular while the ground-level images have a slightly otherworldly quality thanks to the intensity of the lighting.

Despite the inflexibility of the built environment, the circuit has been through a few iterations – chiefly the deletion of the 'Singapore sling' chicane, the widening of several corners to facilitate overtaking, and a new straight on Raffles Avenue because of the Esplanade development.

2023 RACE RECAP

Red Bull's shortcomings in slow corners meant a break from the usual as Max Verstappen qualified only 11th. Polesitter Carlos Sainz led the early laps from Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc, chased by Mercedes' George Russell.

Verstappen briefly entered the picture by staying out when others pitted during an early Safety Car, but continued to struggle. Mercedes double-stacked its cars, which delayed Lewis Hamilton and caused Leclerc to be held in his pit box. This enabled Lando Norris to get in the mix and Sainz cleverly let him stay in DRS range over the closing laps, making life difficult for the charging Russell.

KEY CORNER: TURN 18

A tricky corner but a key arbiter of speed down the main straight, which leads to the track's main overtaking opportunity.



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2023
Carlos
Sainz
Ferrari



2022
Sergio
Pérez
Red Bull



2019
Sebastian
Vettel
Ferrari



2018
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes



2017
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes



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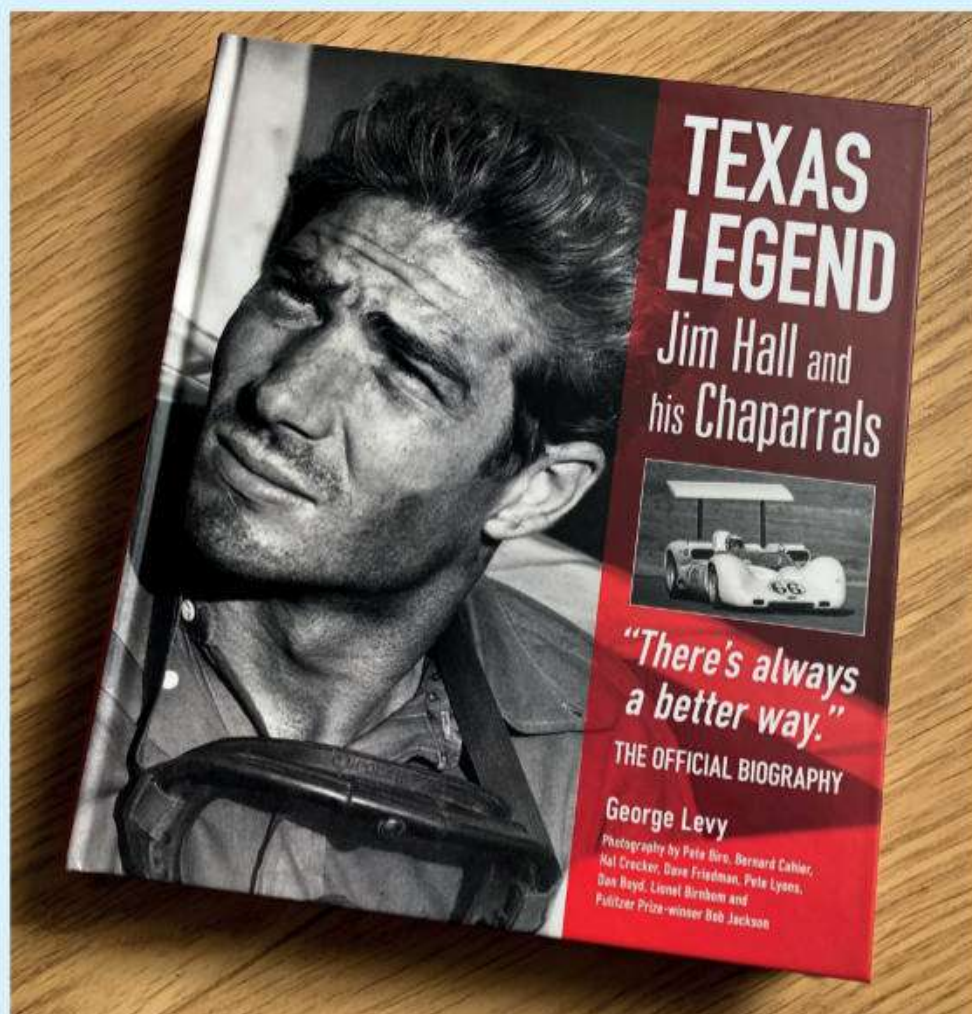
marloewatchcompany.com

Swiss-made to British designs, Marloe's mechanical watches are produced in small batches to an exacting specification. The company was founded in 2015 and used crowdfunding to finance its initial offerings; it's still headquartered near Henley-on-Thames.

The Coniston Auto collection is inspired by world speed record chasers Donald and Sir Malcolm Campbell. Coniston Water in the

Lake District is where Sir Malcolm broke the water speed record aboard Bluebird K4 in 1939, a bar subsequently raised by Donald in K7 in the 1950s. It was while trying to hit 300mph that Donald crashed fatally in 1967; Marloe is in partnership with the Campbell Family Heritage Trust and royalties from watch sales go to the upkeep of the Bluebird vehicles.

Each item in the collection is limited to 300 with 14 different strap options.



TEXAS LEGEND

Author George Levy

Price £60

evropublishing.com

Jim Hall is best known for his feats as a driver and a constructor on the US racing scene, initially in sports cars but subsequently in IndyCars, and for his pioneering work in the field of ground-effect aerodynamics. His Chaparral 2J Can-Am 'sucker car' was before its time (and quickly banned) and he was an early experimenter in the fields of composite construction and semi-automatic transmissions.

Hall also started 11 F1 world

championship races as a driver, scoring points twice. And in 1978 he teamed up with fellow pioneer John Barnard to create the Chaparral 2K IndyCar, which successfully implemented the 'passive' ground-effect principles exploited in F1 by Lotus. He also has a fascinating life story away from the track, as revealed in this evocative biography which benefits from input from the man himself as well as a wealth of rarely seen archive imagery.

ORIENT BAMBINO 38 SMALL SECONDS

Price £287.99-£299.99

orientwatch.co.uk

Since launch in 2022 the Orient Bambino range has cultivated a reputation for being among the best dress watches available under the £300 mark. This latest addition to the range refines the simple but sophisticated aesthetic of previous models by slimming down the 38.4mm diameter case even further. A new

small seconds sub-dial adds to the classical feel. The sunray-finished, matt-coated dials offer a choice of silver, black or ivory with contrasting hands and numerals.

All the models are powered by an automatic 24-jewel calibre F6222 movement with a 40-hour power reserve.



LEGO TECHNIC McLAREN P1

Price £399.99

lego.com

In 2016 Lego launched its Ultimate Car Concept series with the aim of bringing special vehicles to life. These are emphatically for big kids only, given the price, the spectacular 1:8 scale and the sheer number of pieces (3,893 in the McLaren P1's case). Even the most ardent cat lovers will fall out with their favourite felines if Tiddles goes walkabout on the table while

this is under construction.

All the mechanical elements beneath the skin are reproduced in painstaking detail, including the P1's signature 'butterfly' doors – which, say Lego's designers, were particularly hard to model. They will be pleased to learn that the P1's successor is ditching this feature and will have gullwing doors instead.



FINISHING STRAIGHT

THE FINAL LAP

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FLAT
CHATFULL THROTTLE
MUSINGS WITH
ALEX KALINAUCKASPICTURES motorsport
IMAGES

makes good on his promise and develops into a honed megastar that can operate at the limit and not traverse it. For F1 is obviously improved by having another such competitor.

Antonelli's speed is obviously there. It's why Mercedes doesn't really care about his results in what now appears to be a pointless final step on the junior driver ladder in Formula 2. F1 squads hold the power in who gets plucked and who flounders. But then, grand prix racing has always been a flawed meritocracy...

If Antonelli does indeed develop into the next Verstappen, his Monza 2024 crash will no doubt be lionised and referenced ad infinitum. "The 'astonishing' sign of what was to come", perhaps. What won't be remembered is how the Monza circuit commentators went from screaming about his initial FP1-leading lap times to rather sheepishly reporting his shunt.

None of this will matter if it all comes good in the next stages of what is a startlingly fast-progressing career. This was a good idea – with risk that was borne out – to introduce and announce him to the

**IF ANTONELLI DOES
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wider F1 world amidst the frenetic energy of his home race weekend. And sometimes these mishaps come to pass. Wolff and Mercedes are just doing their protection job by pointing out those rapid corner speeds.

What F1 witnessed at Monza is how hard-shifting narratives can start. Antonelli is a likeable, talented young racing driver who surely has a promising future ahead if, when he's truly immersed in F1's pressure cooker, he can avoid the pitfalls of others who were once on a similar trajectory.

The speed of his rise means there are actually few direct comparisons in the last 20 years – save for the man he's (middle) named after and, of course, Verstappen. But here we might remember the clamour around Mick Schumacher before he produced a series of un-special F1 results.

Whatever comes next for Antonelli, his close bond with Wolff will be key. And, with the boiling potential of the Verstappen-to-Mercedes-one-day theory just refusing to dissipate, perhaps the person who should be most concerned by the level of shelter offered post-crash is, ultimately, Russell.

KIMI'S REAL
TAKEAWAY
FROM MONZA

"What he tried to do, the car can't take."

Well, perhaps if Andrea Kimi Antonelli had been driving a race-win-challenging Ferrari or McLaren in FP1 at Monza, he might not have crashed. Isn't this the logical inference of Mercedes boss Toto Wolff's spin on his junior charge's shock slip-up 10 minutes into his Formula 1 weekend bow at last month's Italian Grand Prix, given how that event turned out for the Silver Arrows?

The data does indeed show that Antonelli was going quicker than Max Verstappen managed for Red Bull on the lap that ultimately topped that session at the Lesmo 2 and Ascari turns. But in doing this, Antonelli overheated his tyres in scorching conditions and paid the price. Or George Russell's W15 paid it, at least.

Wolff, as he also subsequently claimed, is certainly right that it's better to try and slow a



**Mercedes chose Antonelli's home
race to confirm his expected
promotion to F1 for 2025**

rapid driver than speed up a slow one. But the point was better left at just that.

Is this first sign of what's to come at Mercedes in 2025 now Antonelli is confirmed as partnering Russell and replacing seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton? Raw speed, expensive crash-damage bills? If so (and in fairness Wolff has said he's expecting and prepared for a such a period, as well as acknowledging that how Antonelli responds to wince-inducing moments such as FP1 at Monza will be telling), we're all in for an exciting time. Even more so if Antonelli then



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